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**The effectiveness of scrutiny for improving education practice: the case  
of Modern Apprenticeships.**

**by**

**Ian Beach**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the**

**Degree of Master of Philosophy**

**School of Education, College of Social Sciences**

**University of Glasgow**

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## Abstract

Many governments fund inspection agencies to scrutinise the effectiveness of their education policy. These inspection agencies monitor education standards and provide feedback to policy makers on how well their policies are being implemented. This dissertation focuses on further education and training policy in Scotland, exploring the effectiveness of scrutiny for improving education practice and learner attainment.

Using a policy evaluation approach, the study develops a set of research questions that are addressed through a case study in a vocational training centre. The centre received a poor inspection report from Her Majesty's Inspectors for its Modern Apprenticeship programme, as a result it was re-inspected 18 months later. This provided a unique opportunity to examine how effective the first inspection was in improving both education practice and the attainment levels of apprentices.

The evaluation of data from the two inspection reports produced noteworthy results and provided a foundation for the field work, which examines the research themes through focus group interviews in the case study centre. The findings from this study have been quite remarkable, revealing that education practice and apprentice attainment improved substantially between the two inspections.

This research concludes that for the case study centre, the inspection process acted as a catalyst for substantial and sustainable improvements in all aspects of the Modern Apprenticeship programme. In addition to these tangible improvements, the first inspection also initiated a sequence of distributed improvement effects and organisational learning within this institution.

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### **Author's Declaration**

“I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.”

Ian Beach

03 October 2018

## Glossary

### Learner attainment

Learner attainment is the achievement of a learning goal based on the learner's competence and skills they have learned. In the context of this study, it refers to the achievement of nationally recognised qualifications. Levels of learner attainment are used widely in education sectors as a measure and comparator of the performance of academic and vocational training establishments.

### Education practice

Education practice is the applied theories and pedagogical practices delivered by education practitioners when imparting knowledge, skills and experience of a particular subject area or areas. In the context of this study, it includes the planning and delivery of academic knowledge and vocational skills along with the application of professional experience and the use of resources to support learning.

### Acronyms

A full list of acronyms may be found in Appendix 1.

## 1. Chapter 1 Introduction

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### 1.1 Background and context to this study

Inspection agencies are funded by many governments around the world to provide scrutiny of education practice and give assurance about the effectiveness of their education policies. These inspection agencies are expensive to administer, require experienced inspectors and call on considerable resources. Furthermore, the inspection process is time consuming for inspection teams and for the institutions under scrutiny. At present, each individual country of the UK has its own inspection agency, based on a bespoke inspection framework, deploying varying methodologies and different reporting arrangements.

This landscape is complicated further by the need to provide scrutiny of education provision for a range of age groups through early years, school-based education, further and higher education and vocational training. As well as serving a function for government, inspection agencies also serve the public by reporting on the quality of education practice, the attainment of learners and on the leadership of educational institutions. Most of these reports employ some form of grading scale to convey a readout of institutional effectiveness, judged through the evaluations of inspectors. These evaluations are summarised in reports under various headings, which are essentially ‘strengths’ and ‘areas for improvement’.

Public inspection reports that contain a large number of areas for development can be particularly high-stakes for education providers, and indeed for the leaders of the institutions under scrutiny. Education providers who are graded as ‘unsatisfactory’ or ‘inadequate’ are unlikely to attract learners and these institutions may have their funding put at risk. Furthermore, leaders and boards

of management of these education institutions may be exposed to public criticism and their positions questioned.

In summary, there is a great deal of human and financial capital invested in inspection agencies and their activities, with potentially wide-ranging consequences arising from the publication of inspection reports. Although these inspection agencies perform the roles outlined above, there is little academic insight into whether they perform another function, often included in their remit, which is to support and help bring about improvement.

## 1.2 Overview of the study and research themes

The overall purpose of this study is to determine whether the scrutiny of further education and vocational training is effective and whether it has an impact on education practice and learner attainment. The dissertation begins with a narrative literature review that examines the development of further education and training in the UK along with existing studies into the impact of scrutiny, largely in the school-based sector. A review of Scottish policy initiatives for further education and vocational and training is then developed into a useful summary and one of these policies is evaluated in detail. This evaluation advances the main research theme concerning the dual approach of the Scottish inspection agency Education Scotland. The two primary research questions for exploration that emerge from this initial investigation are;

**Does inspection policy achieve the dual aims of delivering an independent readout of the quality of education practice along with a roadmap for improvement?**

**and;**

**Does scrutiny have a positive impact on education practice and learner attainment?**

The research element commences with an exploration of the research questions by analysing secondary data obtained from two inspection reports of a case study training centre. These inspection reports are based on a Modern Apprenticeship programme that had performed poorly in a first inspection and was then re-inspected. The analysis of this data provides the foundation to establish a core set of questions that are then explored in focus group interviews in the case study centre.

An evaluation of the rich primary data source from the focus group interviews provides quite remarkable results in relation to the effectiveness of inspection policy and its impact on education practice and learner attainment. This evaluation also offers evidence that the dual aims of the Education Scotland inspection approach are supported, and for this case study, have positive intended and unintended consequences.

### 1.3 Motivation and purpose

As one of Her Majesty's Inspectors at Education Scotland, the author's role is to evaluate the quality of education practice and report on the attainment of learners across Scotland. The dual aims of Education Scotland are to scrutinise the quality of education provision provided by the Scottish Government and to support educational institutions to make improvements. The author's work involves the writing of inspection reports and supporting further education and vocational training centres to improve their educational provision.

The themes of this study explore the impact of Scottish Government policy aims in further education and vocational training and the effectiveness of the dual aims of Education Scotland in relation to scrutiny. Overall, the author is keen to explore the effectiveness and impact of these aims in relation to their stated principles.

The motivation for this research is my natural curiosity and, with a background in engineering, a deep-seated interest in examining whether things work as intended and do make a difference. An interesting paradox is that the author has dual roles during this research, in that I am scrutinising the policies of my employer and aim to contribute to the improvement of the processes that are used for inspection.

#### 1.4 Contribution and potential value of the study

My first contribution to the research field is the review of policy literature in the further education and vocational training sector, with a particular focus on Scotland since devolution. This review revealed that available academic literature in this field is relatively scarce and overall, it is an under-researched field in relation to other education sectors.

My second contribution is the findings from the case study based on a combination of secondary sources within the two inspection reports and primary data from focus group interviews. The case study findings establish a close association between the aims of the inspection process and the impact of inspection on education practice and learner attainment. The field work also uncovered unintended consequences from the process of inspection, which were organisational learning and a distributed improvement effect.



## 1.5 Summary of main findings

The main findings from this study are;

- The case studies reveals an example where inspection policy does achieve its dual aims and the inspection process has improved education practice and learner attainment.
- This research has identified a case where external scrutiny has contributed significantly to triggering a sustained improvement process.
- A significant finding is that the process of inspection can create unintended consequences. For the case study centre, there were positive effects associated with organisational learning, culture change and distributed improvements.
- The dual approach of the Scottish inspection agency Education Scotland provides an independent readout of education practice and an incentive for improvement.
- Most research exploring the impact of inspection on education practice and learner attainment is almost exclusively centred on the school-based sector. These studies have been helpful in defining research themes for this study.
- An overview of the Scottish policy context for further education and vocational training identified that a large number of interrelated policies have been introduced over a relatively short period of time.
- There is a disparity in the quantity of, and emphasis given to, the effectiveness of Scottish Government policy initiatives for further education and vocational training. Where evaluation has been carried out, some feedback loops are overlooked which diminishes the opportunities to determine fully the impact of long-term policy aims.

## 1.6 Order of chapters

Chapter two of this dissertation provides a brief overview of the history of further education and vocational training in the UK since the Second World War. There follows a review of academic literature and web sources to establish the current extent of research into the impact of inspection. The third chapter moves on to discuss theoretical and analytical approaches that assist in delimiting the research field and establishes boundaries for the research questions.

Chapter four explores the policy context in Scotland for the further education and vocational training sector, providing a helpful summary of these policies for other researchers. This chapter also examines one of these policies in detail, using the analytical modelling approaches studied in chapter three, to refine further the research questions. Chapter five discusses the methodological approach used in this research, considers some of the methodological challenges encountered and the mitigating strategies developed to overcome these challenges.

Chapter six presents the findings from the secondary data analysis along with evidence from the practical elements of the research carried out during the field work. The final chapter provides the conclusions made based on this research study along with its limitations and makes suggestions for exploring future research opportunities.

## 2. Chapter 2 Literature Review

---

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the available literature relating to the development of further education and vocational training in the UK. The aim is to establish whether scrutiny has a role in improving educational practice and levels of learner attainment. The examination begins with an historical overview of further education and vocational training, including the public accountability of further education institutions. This accountability brings about pressure on policy makers to provide assurance to governments that regulation, through the mechanism of scrutiny, leads not only to value for money but also to the continuous improvement of publicly funded education institutions.

Consideration is then given to the development and purpose of inspection arrangements with a particular focus on the context for Scotland, leading on to an exploration of the association between scrutiny, education practice and learner attainment. To examine this relationship further, the search was widened to include academic studies relating to the impact of scrutiny on school-based educational practice and attainment.

The chapter concludes with thoughts on how the findings from the review of literature might be used to develop approaches for addressing the research aims for this study and establishing the context in which the research would be conducted.

It is worth noting that the author did not start with a blank canvas, having worked in the English further education sector for more than a decade before transferring to Scottish further education around the time that education and training became a devolved power for Scotland. Therefore, the starting point for reviewing relevant literature was the author's experience of the UK further

education sector and the changes taking place over the past thirty years. The knowledge of key publications and policies, along with their implementation, enabled me to engage with relevant literature sources such as government legislation and significant documents from the UK further education and vocational training sector. This detailed understanding was helpful to explore more deeply the lines of enquiry through specialist journals, articles and websites, concentrating the analysis of topics directly onto the research aims.

The use of a key word search technique uncovered an array of relevant UK and international literature, some of which the author has summarised or adapted to suit the topics considered in this dissertation. Overall, the author's experience in the further education and vocational training sector provided a good foundation to explore the narrative behind the literature and collate relevant documents into a useful source of reference for other researchers.

## 2.2 Post-war further education in the UK

This section offers an insight into the development of further education in the UK since the Second World War through to the time when the individual nations of the UK were awarded devolved powers for education and training in the late 1990s.

In the post-war period of austerity, most of the UK further education sector failed to benefit from dedicated financial support from central government to rebuild its infrastructure. Local circumstances and the varying policies of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) across the country determined the individual funding available for each further education institution. As a result, further education and vocational training in the UK became nebulous and disorganised. Venables (1955) suggests everyday conditions at the time as '*make do and mend*' and in which staff members had to work hard to deliver their curriculum.

Consequently, the UK government identified that a more succinct direction for further education was necessary and plans for the future were set out in the

1943 White Paper 'Educational Reconstruction' (Department for Education and Employment, 2001). This was followed shortly after by the Education Act 1944 (Ministry of Education, 1944) in England and Wales and a similar Act for Scotland in 1945 (Ministry of Education, 1945). This extensive legislation created local, regionally based colleges and imposed substantial new obligations on these institutions relating to vocational education and training for young people.

By the mid-1950s, with increased demand for vocational training from a proliferation of post-war manufacturing, political attention was focussed on the technical aspects of education, backed by substantial government investment. Further legislation in the form of the 1956 White Paper (Technical Education White Paper, 1956) was intended to modernise the further education sector in response to industry pressures, creating a new tiered organisational structure for colleges. At this time, colleges were not held to account for their education practice or levels of learner attainment and those students that did not achieve a qualification easily found employment in a buoyant labour market at a lower skill level or in a different career.

Throughout the 1970s, substantial disruption took place within the communities in which colleges were located. The rapidly declining manufacturing base that had previously supported vocational qualifications and apprenticeships over many years impacted significantly on the blend of curriculum subjects offered by local colleges. These changes in society forced colleges to diversify from the complex and demanding suite of traditional trade-based vocational qualifications to a curriculum that provided opportunities for a wider range of learners and one that included more accessible routes into, and progression within, a national qualifications structure.

The democratisation of further education and vocational training was intensified further by a downturn in employment and increasing immigration. The demographic shift created a more diverse UK population and prompted central government to turn their attention to colleges once again. Around this time, central government began to realise that they could make use of colleges as a

vehicle for addressing contemporary social policy issues and subsequently required colleges to take an active role in responding to the changing, and increasingly diverse, needs of society (Carvel J., 2001). By the 1980s, as a consequence of the ever-changing political environment, colleges were made responsible for the delivery of a wider variety of subjects and were compelled to provide additional services for students, such as support for learning difficulties, teaching of second languages and the promotion of employability skills.

Concurrent with these substantial new obligations on the college sector, there was growing pressure on central government funds. This led to increasing accountability for public finances and an active involvement by government departments in setting mandatory targets and performance criteria to validate their expenditure on the college sector. By the early 1990s, the further education sector was scrutinised by a considerable number of government agencies that monitored and reported publicly on the attainment levels of learners and the financial efficiency of all publicly funded colleges.

Shortly after this period of increased scrutiny, a new set of legislative changes were introduced bringing about wide-ranging changes for the further education sector across the UK. Two new Acts of Parliament (Further and Higher Education Act, 1992; Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992) commenced the process of the incorporation of colleges (Beale, 2004). This latest legislation required the governing bodies of colleges to conform, without delay, to a commercial approach for all of their management processes (Smithers and Robison, 2000:13-25). These extensive and rapidly introduced regulations coincided with substantial and fundamental adjustments to the funding arrangements of the college sector. A new funding mechanism, which coincided with an overall funding cut, featured targeted output related funding that was designed to encourage a new market economy for colleges through the introduction of competitive pressures (Simkins, 2000). These new arrangements established for the first time, a direct relationship between the attainment levels of learners studying at colleges and the quantum of funding received by institutions to teach these learners.

The emphasis on finances continued throughout the 1990s with all additional funding made available to colleges being predicated on further improvements to education practice, higher levels of attainment for college learners and an overall increase in efficiency (Department for Education and Employment, 2001). This shift in political emphasis was intended to drive forward a competitive approach for the funding of UK colleges, embedding outcome related funding as a key feature, which has been sustained to this day.

During this new era of '*value for money funding*', further and more fundamental changes were introduced for the UK further education sector when the Scotland Act 1998 made provision for a Scottish Government and cemented the devolved powers for further and higher education into UK legislation (The Stationery Office, 1998).

### 2.2.1 National divergence and the development of inspection arrangements

Major political developments around the turn of the century resulted in significant turbulence for all education sectors across the individual nations of the UK and this section concentrates on how inspection arrangements began to advance as a result of these changes. The section closes with a more acute focus on the development of inspection arrangements in the further education and vocational training sector in Scotland, as this is the basis of this study.

The antecedents to many of the changes to regulation and inspection in UK further education and vocational training are to be found in the legislation that brought about the incorporation of UK further education colleges in 1993 (The Stationery Office Limited, 1992). Prior to this, colleges received only occasional scrutiny by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and in most LEAs, were inspected by local inspectors of education. At this time, inspectors were distributed on a regional basis, and although they had regular contact with colleges, inspections were infrequent and the process was less prescribed and of less significance than it is today. Inspection reports of the time could easily be overlooked, or even

disregarded, as any intervention measures taken in schools and colleges was a matter for LEAs rather than for central government. The main benefit of inspection reports of the time was to use the findings of inspectors in a supportive way to aid institutional development, or more commonly as a lever for change. For example, to appeal for extra funding and resources that inspectors might have commented on as being deficient. We will explore the themes of support for improvement and drivers of change later in this dissertation.

The incorporation of colleges in 1993 brought about a national system for the further education and vocational training sector of the UK when, for the first time, colleges were separated from Local Authority control. To oversee this new system, the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) was created with the responsibility for funding the college sector and was made accountable to central government for assuring the quality of further education and training. Subsequently, the FEFC developed a suite of performance indicators along with a new inspectorate in order to fulfil these responsibilities.

Under these new arrangements (The Further Education Funding Council, 1993) a new system comprising a four-year cycle of inspection was introduced, along with a numerical grading scale to evaluate and publicly report on the performance of all colleges. Overall, colleges responded positively to these arrangements as they included the extensive use of associate inspectors drawn from the further education sector and the inspection arrangements were based on an explicit and transparent framework. The inclusion of a process of systematic annual self-assessment also facilitated institutions to develop expertise in making robust, evidence-based judgements and this was seen to be positive by the college sector. However, some grades identified in inspection reports were linked to the funding allocation of an institution. For example, colleges were not allowed to expand their curriculum provision in subject areas that had been identified as poor quality. This approach heralded the beginning of a clear association between the findings reported by inspectors and the



monitoring of institutional performance, including the quality of education practice and levels of learner attainment.

As the relatively new, and arguably inexperienced, governments of the individual nations of the UK began to develop their own education policy, they synchronised their policy aims and inspection approaches with their individual direction of travel towards separate national education systems.

For this research, we will concentrate on the evolution of inspection in Scottish further education, including the context of Scottish Government policy priorities and the wider changes taking place in the further education and vocational training sector.

With change intensifying in the English education system there was growing criticism of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) model of inspection by academic commentators, head teacher associations and the think tank Policy Exchange. Such denunciation prompted a consultation on the future of inspection in England (Ofsted, 2014). This consultation is one of a number of stimuli that suggested the need for a root and branch review of arrangements for quality assurance and improvement in the English further education and training sector. For further education in England, the FEFC sought to carry out its responsibility for assuring quality through its new inspectorate (Fletcher, 2015), whilst Scotland began to develop a new approach.

### 2.2.2 An overview of regulation in Scottish further and higher education

Resulting from the passage of the Scotland Act 1998 the Scottish Executive, referred to as the Scottish Government since August 2007, and Scottish Parliament were officially convened on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999 (The Scotland Act 1998, 1998). From this date onwards, those devolved matters previously exercised by the Secretary of State for Scotland and other UK Ministers, were transferred powers and became the responsibility of Scottish Ministers.

Following the transfer of these powers for education and training, the Scottish Parliament established the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) through the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005 to meet its legislative duties across the Scottish post-compulsory sector (Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act, 2005). The SFC is defined as a Non-Departmental Public Body (NPDB) and as such operates at '*arms-length*' to the Scottish Government. Legislation sets out a framework for governance within which the Scottish further and higher education system operates and also defines the Scottish Funding Council's main duties and powers, as described below;

There is established a body to be known as the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. This body is accountable for the quality of fundable further and higher education in Scotland.

Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005, (2005:1)

and in order to assure this accountability;

The Council is to secure that provision is made for assessing and enhancing the quality of fundable further education and fundable higher education provided by fundable bodies.

Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005, (2005:9)

In addition to being held accountable for further and higher education provision, it can be seen from the above extract that the SFC is responsible for not only *assessing*, but also *enhancing* the quality of the further education that it funds. The SFC transfers its responsibilities for scrutiny arrangements through a Service Level Agreement with Education Scotland that provides for inspection and support for improvement across all Scottish education sectors, excluding Higher Education. This Service Level Agreement is reviewed regularly to allow for variations in emphasis of inspection approaches that accord with current government priorities.

The Service Level Agreement between the SFC and Education Scotland is a mechanism whereby the amount, nature and type of inspection activities can be adjusted each year. Over time, these activities have increasingly focussed on how well education institutions retain learners, on the attainment levels of these learners and the quality of education practice they receive.

Notably, the key feature of the SFC arrangement to secure both the assessment and enhancement of the quality of further education through Education Scotland is the transfer of the dual roles for scrutiny (assessment) and support for quality improvement (enhancement). These inter-locking responsibilities are seen by some to be conflicting and the issue remains controversial to this day (parliament.scot, 2017:2). A closer examination of Education Scotland and its purpose follows in later sections.

Similar bodies to Education Scotland also exist in the other UK countries, with Ofsted in England (Ofsted, 2018), Estyn the education inspectorate for Wales (Estyn, 2018a) and the Education and Training Inspectorate (Etni) in Northern Ireland (Etni, 2018). Estyn undertook a major review of its approach to inspection recently and have now issued new inspection guidance (Estyn, 2018b).

One note of interest is the arrangements established for the assessment and enhancement of higher education within the legislation described above. Although the SFC is responsible for the funding of both further and higher education institutions in Scotland, the higher education sector has separate arrangements for quality assurance across the whole of the UK and this is overseen by a single agency, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

## 2.3 Apprenticeships

### 2.3.1 Early developments

Apprenticeships provide vocational training for new generations of the workforce who wish to gain a license to practice in a regulated trade or profession. Most apprenticeships consist of on-the-job training while working for an employer which is supplemented with off-the-job training consisting of theoretical studies. The duration of an apprenticeship is usually between one and five years, and on successful completion a certificate is issued that confirms the employee has gained a professional level of competence. Further information on apprenticeships in the UK can be found at Gov.uk, 2019 and for apprenticeships in Scotland at Apprentice.scot, 2019.

Apprenticeships originally emerged in the UK during the Middle Ages and at that time were closely related to the mediaeval craft guilds (Richard, 2011). These early apprenticeships were essentially the vocational education and training curriculum of today and operated in a similar manner with apprentices (or trainees) learning the theoretical and practical skills of a particular trade from their masters.

The first national system for training apprentices in England was introduced in 1563 by the Statute of Artificers, which was an Act of Parliament under Queen Elizabeth I. This legislation was introduced to address various issues in society at the time such as labour shortages due to mortality from epidemic disease, inflation, poverty and general social disorder. To alleviate these issues, new regulations were introduced for fixing prices, imposing maximum wages, restricting workers' freedom of movement and regulating training. (Holderness, 1976, Snell, 1996, Elizabethan, 2019).

Over the centuries, apprenticeship systems in the UK developed through a variety of different phases and parliamentary acts due to a range of factors, probably the most notable being the technological changes occurring in the late

nineteenth century. Other countries developed similar systems of apprenticeships, with the USA and Australia in particular basing their arrangements on the UK model. Gospel, 1994 discusses the changing nature of apprenticeships in these three countries over time and makes an interesting comparison with vocational training in Germany. He notes some of the influences of, and relationships between, labour market systems and the economy as a whole, recognising the significance of state intervention in relation to external and internal labour market failure.

“A free market-based system of training may have some advantages in terms of greater responsiveness to market forces and greater mobility between firms. This may make skill formation more relevant to the needs of industry and may encourage allocative efficiency within the economy. However, market failure can mean free-riding and a short-sighted approach to training. In turn, in periods of economic upswing, this will mean skill shortages, poaching and a bidding up of wages. This occurred in Britain in the 1980s.”

Gospel, (1994:519)

The approach of employers to work force training is discussed further in the next section.

Following the Second World War, the number of apprenticeship opportunities reached a peak as the UK began to rebuild its manufacturing base. However, as a result of the changes taking place throughout society during the 1960s and 1970s, along with a weakening of the country's manufacturing base, these numbers declined significantly. This decline intensified further in the 1980s, when policy makers and employers began to question the effectiveness of the training model used to deliver apprenticeships.

In more recent years, energised by successive governments to increase skills training overall, apprenticeships are now available in the form of Modern Apprenticeships across many different employment sectors including care, finance and business administration. In the current era, apprenticeship training

remains important to employers in traditional skill areas such as engineering, construction and hospitality, and is increasingly prominent in other employment sectors such as customer service and care. With this growing diversity of apprenticeship opportunities, there are now over two hundred Modern Apprenticeship frameworks available in England alone (Gov.uk, 2018).

### 2.3.2 Apprenticeship training and the workforce

Apprenticeships have the most direct association between skills training and the workforce. They are also a lengthy process, as the requirements for this type of vocational training require time for individuals to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and competences. This time-consuming process, and the associated cost to train apprentices, is a very important consideration for employers when planning their future workforce requirements. Over the past fifty years however, the accurate forecasting of labour market supply and demand has become increasingly volatile and unpredictable. The fast pace and changing nature of today's workplace makes it remarkably difficult for employers to determine and plan their workforce over and above the fast-moving transformations in technology. As Whittaker and Williams, 2016 observe, the skill-set boundaries have now become blurred as employers strive to establish a workforce of both multidisciplinary individuals and teams.

“Today's workplace is increasingly characterized by self-directed teams of professionals and skilled workers working together as a single unit. Since so many jobs are now team jobs, from application development firms striving to produce that next killer mobile application to veterinary medicine clinics helping treasured pets survive medical emergencies, it is difficult to separate out the professionals from the skilled workers. It is even more difficult to know what education, knowledge, specialized training, certifications, and licenses are actually necessary for the team roles being played effectively.”

Whittaker and Williams, (2016:15)

However, the unpredictability of workforce planning is not the single reason that skills training has lagged behind skills demand. For many years the term '*skills-gap*' has been used to summarise a shortfall in the supply of appropriate labour and it is worth reflecting on the responsibility that employers have to train their own workforce, rather than depend on the availability of skilled workers from a common 'pool'. Clearly, the time required to develop a new apprentice into someone who is able to actively contribute to increasing profit is a significant element. As mentioned above, this training has an attached cost and very many employers, both small and large, are reluctant to make this investment. This set of circumstances is summarised comprehensively by Streeck, 1989 below;

“In effect, the fundamental uncertainty for employers recovering their training expenses in an open labour market - rudimentary and incomplete as the latter may be - turns skills, from the viewpoint of the individual employer, into a *collective good*. If an employer provides training, he is no more than adding to a common pool of skilled labour which is in principle accessible to all other employers in the industry or the locality, many of which are his competitors. While the individual employer may well recognize the importance of skilled workers for his enterprise, he also knows that if he incurs the expenses for their training, his competitors can easily “poach” his trained workers by offering them a higher wage, with their overall labour costs still remaining below his. Because the rewards of his investment can so easily be socialized whereas the costs remain his own, an employer in a competitive labour market will therefore be tempted not to train, or to train as little as possible, and “buy-in” needed skills from his competition. As they are likely to perceive their pay-off matrix in much the same way as he, they will probably prefer not to train either. As a result, there will be a chronic undersupply of skilled labour.”

Streeck, (1989:94)

Therefore, each employer needs to balance their investment in time and cost for training their apprentices with the risk of losing their apprentices to the competition. However, not all countries have these issues to the same extent. For example, Euwals and Winkelmann, 2001 provide an interesting insight into this ongoing narrative and discuss why firms in Germany are willing to invest in apprenticeship training, even though many apprentices will leave the company soon after completing their training. In their empirical study, they find that

employees that complete their apprenticeship successfully and stay with the company receive higher wages and have longer first-job employment than those apprentices who leave the company. They believe that these results support a theory whereby companies use the apprenticeship system to select and retain the more able apprentices and therefore recoup the costs of investing in skills that are in principle, portable.

### 2.3.3 International aspects

When looking more widely at apprenticeship training globally, the report by Chankseliani, Keep and Wilde, 2017 presents the results of their analysis of apprenticeship systems in eight countries: Australia, Denmark, Egypt, England, Finland, Germany, India and South Africa. They identify, similar to national inspection arrangements, that national situations and choices vary considerably and argue that in relation to the starting point for national apprenticeship policy, there are three broad categories of country. Table 1 has been developed from the findings in their report.

**Table 1** Developments in national apprenticeship policy by country

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Developments in national apprenticeship policy</b>
India, Egypt, Sweden and South Africa	These countries either lack an apprenticeship system entirely or have a very low level of provision that plays a marginal role with the overall national vocational education and training (VET) system.
England	A country that has a history of apprenticeship provision as a reasonably significant component of their VET system, but which have faced a decline in apprenticeships and may now wish to revitalise and perhaps expand provision.
Australia, Denmark Germany and Switzerland	These countries have relatively large, well-established and vibrant apprenticeship systems, which they wish to maintain and perhaps expand incrementally, particularly into new occupational areas in response to technological change and new working patterns.

Developed from Chankseliani, Keep and Wilde, (2017:73)



In all countries, apprenticeship systems have evolved over time as economic, employment and training environments developed alongside advancements in society, industrial processes and technology. Smith, 2019 evaluates the readiness of apprenticeship systems to cope with major developments affecting the future work place, drawing on data from recent Australian and international research projects. In conclusion, Smith's study suggests there are three major features of future work that might compel apprenticeship systems to change radically, and in the relatively short term. These are Industry 4.0, globalisation and the gig economy (Smith, 2019). The effect of these factors could adjust the level of apprenticeships for Industry 4.0 workers from traditional vocational and training systems, currently delivered in colleges and by private training providers, to routinely include higher education institutions and professional bodies. Globalisation brings about the challenges of developing apprenticeship qualifications that are delivered in one country whilst being both transferable and recognised across many other countries. Finally, the gig economy has produced a workforce of sub-contracted employees who are not formally employed, with conditions of employment that are not protected by standard regulatory practice. This lack of formality and regulation might exclude many workers from the opportunity of a traditional apprenticeship and potentially, qualification systems may need to develop training opportunities outside of traditional apprenticeships.

A recent research report (CIPD, 2018) exploring the views of employers' attitudes to the apprenticeship levy introduced in England found that despite some recent improvements, on balance, apprenticeships in England are weighted towards lower level qualifications with very few apprentices engaging at higher levels. This report concludes that England is trailing behind the best systems in Europe - such as Germany, Switzerland and Austria, where nearly all apprenticeships are at advanced or higher levels.

“For instance, in 2015 Ofsted reported that inspectors had found examples of intermediate apprenticeships that offered little or no off-the-job training, only delivered low-level skills, and that some apprentices were being accredited for ‘making coffee, serving sandwiches or cleaning floors’. There are also concerns that the current apprenticeship system is not functioning well enough as a route into the labour market for young people. In 2016/17, just 25% of apprenticeship starts went to young people aged under 19....”

CIPD, (2018:3)

Given the above considerations, it is most likely that apprenticeship systems in England, and the UK more generally, will need to continue to evolve as existing trades and professions advance and new technologies emerge. Gicheva et al., 2019 make suggestions for making apprenticeships more resilient to future changes, in particular in those sectors that are experiencing increasing technical and automation expansion.

Our analysis has revealed that many apprenticeships are in occupations where there is significant risk of automation. In other words, there is a significant risk that individuals undertake apprenticeships and find that their training soon becomes redundant.

Gicheva et al., (2019:39)

Based on historical developments, it would be appealing to envisage that more employers will begin to pay closer attention to the provision of appropriate vocational education and training for their future workforce based on the strengths of apprenticeship systems that have endured for several hundred years.

The next section moves on to review the origins of inspection and its development within the UK.

## 2.4 The origins of inspection and its basis in UK education

In order to gain a greater understanding of how inspection might impact on an education institution, this section examines how inspection approaches have evolved in the UK, along with a more detailed investigation into the scope and nature of inspection in Scotland. This is an important context for this study and through this literature summary, several areas for exploration relevant to the research aims began to emerge.

Scrutiny, or inspection, in whatever form is used commonly by governments to provide independent evidence to their public under the obligations of accountability and transparency. Almost all inspection methodologies and arrangements therefore are bespoke to the context of a particular country and to the challenges or focus at a point in time; such as the desire to improve learner attainment, to widen participation, to enhance education practice or respond to the curriculum requirements of a changing society. This literature review has determined that there is a wide variety of inspection models around the world and none of these is directly comparable to the UK models. Moreover, there are key differences in the inspection approaches and frameworks for all education sectors within the four UK countries. For the UK education sector, there has been a cumulative and sustained focus on the measurement and improvement of education provision, maintained primarily by the publication of institutional attainment data.

The origins for the inspection of education in the UK can be traced back to the early 1800s (Burgess and Welsby, 1961) and up until 1992, schools were inspected by Local Education Authority (LEA) inspectors working under the supervision of HMI. However, this system was discredited due to inconsistent standards being set across the country and concerns about the independence of inspectors under the employment of local chief education officers and councillors. Additionally, there was a perception from the Conservative government at the time that left-wing LEAs and inspectors were unenthusiastic

about the implementation of elements of the Conservative government's agenda. This motivated the government to devise a new approach and as a result, the Education (Schools) Act 1992 was introduced, establishing the Ofsted as an independent, non-ministerial government department reporting directly to Parliament (HMSO, 1992).

The development of inspection approaches for both compulsory and post-compulsory education during the last few years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century brought about the emergence of two important factors relevant to this research; close attention on improving the overall quality of education provision and on value for money.

In relation to quality improvement, we see how this element is introduced into the definition of inspection from the School Inspectors Handbook;

“Inspection may be defined as a specific occasion when an educational institution is examined and evaluated as a place of learning in such a way that advice may be given for its improvement.”

Commonwealth Secretariat, (1998:1)

Introducing the term improvement into this definition, is a clear signal that inspection is intended to not only measure and report on the *condition* of education provision at a point in time, but is intended and expected to bring about positive change.

When considering the element of value for money, we see that under the principles of inspection for Ofsted, laid out in a parliamentary memorandum, that by 2010 the purpose of inspection specifically includes the terms '*quality*', '*service standards*' and '*value for money*'.

“The purposes of inspections should be to provide the public and government with an objective, professional account of the quality and resultant standard of services and provision, and value for money, regarding those inspected in each setting.”

Parliamentary Memorandum, (2010:1)

This statement makes a clear connection between the process of inspection and public accountability, which increased the emphasis on evaluating the performance of education institutions and the scope of public reporting.

Most countries have sought to improve their inspection methodology, as with any monitoring process, and the UK inspection agencies have over time, refined and improved their arrangements for scrutiny when new ideas develop and attitudes change. One might argue that these refinements are influenced to some extent by a propensity to evidence a positive impact from education policy and exemplify that government policy is improving levels of educational attainment. Blanc (n.d.) identifies that a number of countries have undertaken to reform their inspection process, including Mexico in 1995, many Central and Eastern European and former Soviet countries from the late 1990s, the UK from 2005 in particular and the Netherlands from 2006, with the latest reforms in Lithuania since 2010 and Italy since 2011. Blanc (n.d.) also observes;

“these reforms try and make the legal framework for inspections clearer and stronger, to ensure that inspections and enforcement are more risk-based and risk-focused, and aim more at promoting compliance and ensuring positive outcomes than at detecting and punishing violations.”

Blanc, (n.d:2-3)

Overall, we can see how the purpose of inspection is often embedded in a system backed by legal frameworks and shaped by political priorities. By referring to enforcement and compliance such as this, the public reporting of findings from inspection reports for individual institutions can have consequences, and these are more often than not centred on failings in education practice or low levels of learner attainment.

The summary here aligns with the approach in the further education and vocational training sector that was highlighted earlier in concentrating scrutiny attention on the ‘*output*’ aspects of education. Later chapters explore the approach to defining and evaluating the outputs of education in greater detail, using analytical modelling approaches.

## 2.5 The imperatives of public accountability

Although government agencies such as the SFC operate ‘*at arms-length*’ from governments, there are considerable opportunities through legislation, memoranda and service level agreements to politicise inspection approaches and the ways in which the findings of inspections are reported. One key and increasingly powerful mechanism given the advent of social media for both promoting and challenging the success of government policies is institutional accountability through public reporting. This section relies predominantly on sources from the school-based education sector, as the literature review identified that few relevant studies focus on further education and vocational training.

### 2.5.1 Reporting of inspection activity

With education policy considered a priority for all governments, and given the central role of education in economic growth, validation of the effectiveness of education policy is clearly essential to maintain support for political initiatives. As Campbell and Levin (2009) emphasise;

“The public, professionals and policy-makers want to know that their decisions, investments and actions are based on evidence.”

Campbell and Levin, (2009:48)

Their research, based on the Canadian education system, explores how student attainment data is used to support evidence-informed policy and practice. The study focuses mainly on classroom-based *assessment for learning* approaches, concluding (Campbell and Levin, 2009:62) that there is a requirement to balance the use of data for external accountability, with that used for internal accountability and improvement processes.

External accountability is often communicated through the process of public reporting. The findings from a major research exercise (Gray A. and SICI, 2014) established that most European countries in the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI) community have some form of national, or state inspection, of schools that produces a report. The findings of the SICI research appear to support a case for the publication of inspection findings, and notes that in Berlin for example, the publication of school inspection reports is seen as having had ‘*high impact*’. However, in some countries, these reports are not made available to the public, even those reports that may have a positive influence on the schools that have been inspected.

The rising pressure on public accountability and increased focus on the publication of performance data, driven further by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (HMSO, 2000), has created a ‘*league table culture*’ from which parents in particular are able to access data to establish the ‘*best*’ school in their local

community. The publication and analysis of league tables<sup>1</sup> themselves have the potential to engender significant change in education policy. For example, Sweden (OECD, 2015) recently undertook a major review of its school provision based on its disappointing performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), sparking a national debate on the quality and future approach for school-based education in Sweden. Given the increasing importance placed on performance data for educational attainment, energised by associated league tables that include worldwide comparisons produced by organisations such as PISA, the challenge for national inspectorates is to access and evaluate objectively the quality of education practice and to report accurately on levels of learner attainment.

It is worth considering briefly how the quality of education practice and learner attainment statistics are interpreted by the public. Public reports are often used by parents to select the highest performing school in their area and by media to highlight inadequacies in those institutions that are reported by inspectors as not performing well. In this regard, the judgements of inspectors in their reports and evaluations by national inspection agencies can become particularly high-stakes. This heightens the requirement for robust evidence-based research on how effective inspection approaches are at reporting on and improving learning organisations. We will discuss in later sections the potential effects of high-stakes inspection reports.

### 2.5.2 Scrutiny, education practice and learner attainment

There are many countries across the world with as many different sets of inspection arrangements. Although there are a number of similarities amongst frameworks and approaches across the globe, each individual nation has an

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<sup>1</sup> Author's note: In the UK there are league tables for both schools and universities, however these have never been published for colleges.



independent and distinct framework for reporting on the quality of its education provision.

It became apparent through reviewing the literature, journals, websites and research articles relating to inspection approaches, that almost all studies undertaken are school-based. This may be as a consequence of very few European countries having inspection arrangements for vocational education and training (Gray A. and SICI, 2014; SICI International Conference, 2015). Another factor affecting the balance of available research between the post-compulsory and school-based sectors is that compulsory education has a qualifications structure that allows for easier comparisons of publicly available learner achievement data, providing a platform for more logical and robust analysis. In searching for literature relating to further education and vocational training there was a remarkable lack of reference to, or consideration of, the relationship between inspection arrangements, high-quality education provision and in particular, the effectiveness of inspection. To explore more detail behind the association between scrutiny, education practice, and learner attainment, there now follows an interesting review of one valuable piece of research that connects well with these themes.

### 2.5.3 School-based studies into the effectiveness of inspection

Rosenthal (2004) investigated the relationship between the Ofsted inspections of state secondary schools and the school's exam performance. The research of Rosenthal investigates empirically, the direct effect of scrutiny by Ofsted on the exam performance of students aged up to 16 years in state-financed, non-selective English secondary schools. Rosenthal bases the investigation on information from nearly 12,000 observations across some 2,300 state secondary schools undergoing around 2,700 Ofsted inspections over a five-year period. The concept tested is whether, in the year of an Ofsted inspection, the measure of school quality changes. Rosenthal suggests in conclusion, that school staff might

concentrate more during an inspection year on preparing for and doing well in the Ofsted inspection, than on supporting pupils to do well in their exams.

The study establishes, quite notably, that there is a small but well-determined negative effect on exam results during an Ofsted inspection year, based on learner attainment data over a five year period. This is clearly an unintended consequence of the inspection process, and if this tendency extends to other sectors could have significant implications for inspection approaches. It could be argued however, that a longitudinal study based on individual schools would be required to determine whether, in subsequent years to the Ofsted intervention, improvement returned and was sustained. The research of Rosenthal does nevertheless raise an interesting theory, based on conversations with teachers, who believe that there is a greater imperative generated from the annual publication of comparative exam results on influencing school improvement, than an Ofsted inspection itself.

Within this brief exploration of school-based research, it is clear that the analysis of the effects of inspection on education practice and learner attainment is suffused with complications. It appears that the many layers of interaction within institutions such as school leadership, teacher input, pupil responsiveness and the formal publication of performance data may contribute more strongly to individual learner attainment than the activities of external scrutiny agencies.

Measurement and comparison is blurred further when demographics across institutions are introduced into the deliberations. Moore (2004) explores, in a schools context, the differences between schools and attempts to answer the key question of '*what it is that makes a difference in the effectiveness of schools*'. Moore (2004) considers several studies to understand this theme more clearly, arguing that research into school effectiveness indicates that pupils attending more effective schools gain benefits over those who attend less effective ones. However, he also comments;

“Researchers in this area invariably urge caution - not least because policy-makers are inclined to pounce with joy upon such findings as presenting ‘kwik-fix’ solutions for school improvement.”

Moore, (2004:32)

This consideration can be reflected on further by considering other studies that examine the effects of school inspection. de Wolf and Janssens (2007) provide an interesting overview of studies into the effects and side effects of *control mechanisms* based on a range of empirical studies. They focus on external control systems and characterise these into two main types; (a) external evaluation by means of school inspections and (b) accountability systems, such as the publication of an institutions performance data<sup>2</sup>.

The work of de Wolf and Janssens (2007) provides a useful resource within school-based education, as they also identify that empirical studies on the effects of control mechanisms in education are relatively scarce.

Furthermore, they deduce that although there exists a wide variety of research into the effects of inspection visits, these studies differ considerably in the way that causal effects are measured. Overall, the authors distinguish four outcome measures: *satisfaction, behaviour, policy improvement and educational*

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of these system types and other educational control or evaluation systems in Europe, see Eurydice (2015:2)

*achievement* that have been investigated in relation to inspection and performance indicators. In Table 2, the author has summarised their findings relating to the effects of inspection which are most relevant to this research to illustrate the connections between the inspection process, education practice and learner attainment. The red text in Table 2 has contributed to ideas for the establishment of the research questions in this study.

**Table 2**                      **An overview of the findings from studies on the effects of inspection and performance indicators by de Wolf and Janssens (2007)**

<b>Effects of inspection</b>	<b>Overview of findings from the studies summarised in de Wolf and Janssens, 2007</b>
<b>Effectiveness of inspection visits</b>	Most of the studies find that a significant majority of the schools (70-90%) experience the inspection visit as professional, supportive and positive contribution to the quality of their school. On this basis, the conclusion is that school inspections are effective. Contrarily, other studies find the exact effects of school inspections are still unclear.
<b>Effects of inspection visits on behaviour of teachers and school leaders</b>	The few studies on the effects of inspection visits on behaviour focus on whether an inspection improves teaching strategies or has a bearing on leadership. Overall, findings show that individual teachers who have been inspected are inclined to implement changes in classroom practice shortly after an inspection visit and inspection visits do lead to changes in behaviour among a large majority of school leaders, particularly those who are younger and less experienced.
<b>Effects of inspection visits on school policy</b>	The key focus in this type of research is to what extent inspection visits lead to improvement of school policy and the consequences for school improvement. Studies broadly conclude that inspection visits have positive effects on school improvement. However, very few details emerge regarding the type of policy changes or the influence of other factors such as context and culture.
<b>Effects of inspection visits on learner attainment</b>	Four studies are considered that investigate the direct relationship between an inspection visit and examination results at secondary schools in the UK. The methods of analysis vary and a critical assessment is only possible from the analysis method used by Rosenthal (2004). Notably however, all four studies establish that Ofsted visits have a negative effect in the year of the inspection visit. Unfortunately, longer term effects were not investigated in these studies, nor were the effects in other sectors of education.
<b>Effects of (public) performance indicators</b>	Most research into the effects of performance indicators is limited to analyses relating to the reliability of league tables and concludes that league tables are insufficiently reliable to have any effect at all. However, studies on the effects of performance indicators can be distinguished further in the sections below.
<b>Effects of performance indicators on school choice behaviour</b>	Research on school choice behaviour in England and France highlights that the publication of performance indicators have little consequence and conclusions from a number of international studies show that parents in general pay little attention to public performance indicators. This may be related to the lack of access by parents to this information or their lack of awareness of its existence. Also, the use of the available information requires a certain amount of training, and the performance indicators often reflect only one of the factors on which parents base their choice of school. Teachers however, appear to be more sensitive to performance indicators and the study by Waterreus (2003) in Dutch secondary education finds that schools with 'good scores' experience less staff turnover and attract more new teachers, although these effects are relatively minor.

<b>Effects of performance indicators on 'voice'</b>	Studies show that public performance indicators may increase the involvement of parents and pupils and provide them with instruments to contribute more effectively to school improvement. However, Meijer (2004) concludes that there is hardly any empirical evidence of this possible effect and according to his research public performance indicators are currently not, or scarcely, used and few parents are aware of the existence of this information.
<b>Effects of performance indicators on educational quality</b>	From the studies considered, performance indicators appear to have hardly any effect on educational quality. Neither French nor English schools actively utilise these publications to improve the quality of the education they provide. However, an interesting side-effect is evidenced by 'window dressing' linked to the desire to achieve short-term effects. Studies identified that school principals have a different opinion and for example Dutch school principals regard the 'stimulation of schools to improve (educational) quality' as the most important effect from publishing reports and information on the quality of schools.
<b>Effects of performance indicators on student results</b>	Two studies in particular, Hanushek and Raymond (2005) and Jacob (2005), show that the introduction of an accountability system in the United States (the 'No Child Left Behind Act') has a positive impact on student achievement. Using statistical methods, the authors prove that the introduction of state accountability led to an increase in test scores. Both papers also studied which causal mechanisms underpin the effectiveness of the accountability system, with Jacob (2005) concluding that factors such as test-specific skills and student effort cause positive effects along with strategic behaviour by teachers.

Based on de Wolf and Janssens, (2007:379-396)

## 2.6 Side-effects of the inspection process

Increasingly, the readout from inspection reports by scrutiny agencies can be significant for educational institutions and training providers and may, in cases of poor performance, lead to negative consequences. As mentioned previously, the outcome of an inspection visit has become increasingly high-stakes and this introduces the potential for negative side-effects to emerge, depending on the attitude of individual institutions towards the inspection process. These side-effects are characterised by potentially unethical activities known as ‘gaming’ or ‘playing the system’ and which constitute deliberate acts designed to enhance the outcome of an inspection.

The presence of gaming remains a possibility in many fields and is not limited to inspections or to education. One example is the scrutiny of health services, where regime targets were introduced into the English public health care service leading ultimately to a high risk of English health care managers being sacked as a result of poor performance on measured indices (Bevan and Hood, 2006). Bevan and Hood, 2006 give a useful overview into the extent of gaming in the English health care system and offer a taxonomy of different approaches to gaming, the extent of which they argue depends on a mixture of motive and opportunity (Bevan and Hood, 2006:522).

As described above, gaming will depend on both motive and opportunity, taking many forms from the mild to the extreme. In relation to an inspection, gaming might be described as those activities designed to deliberately frustrate the efforts of inspectors, auditors or other monitors who are applying rules and procedures to determine true outputs. These activities, where present, may vary in extent from a slight bending of the rules to deliberate distortion of reported outputs which are intrinsically fraudulent.

These behavioural influences are also present in education institutions and are intended to counteract the underpinning principles of the inspection process. Returning to the studies of de Wolf and Janssens on control mechanisms in

education, they provide an interesting overview into the effects and side-effects encountered in education and identify a number of potential negative consequences. These side-effects include institutional behaviours such as impression management, gaming, risk avoidance, and in some instances, misrepresentation or data manipulation that is synonymous with fraud. de Wolf and Janssens (2007) also identify a set of unintended strategic behaviours and other side effects, all of which are likely to impact on the inspection process to a greater or lesser degree and these are summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3      Side effects of control mechanisms in education, differentiated into category and type**

<b>SIDE EFFECT (categories)</b>	<b>EXAMPLES</b>
<b><i>1. Intended strategic behaviour / gaming</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- window dressing</li> <li>- misrepresentation</li> <li>- fraud and deception</li> <li>- orchestration of peer review</li> <li>- reshaping the test pool</li> </ul>
<b><i>2. Unintended strategic behaviour</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formalisation and proceduralisation</li> <li>- teaching to the test</li> <li>- teaching to inspection</li> <li>- tunnel vision</li> <li>- indicator fixation</li> <li>- sub-optimisation</li> <li>- myopia</li> <li>- convergence</li> <li>- ossification</li> <li>- isomorphism</li> </ul>
<b><i>3. Other side effects</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- stress</li> <li>- good schools 'resting on their laurels'</li> <li>- market effects</li> </ul>

de Wolf and Janssens, (2007:383)



Several of the studies reviewed by de Wolf and Janssens (2007) refer specifically to the existence of these deliberate strategic activities, characterised as gaming, which consider an inspection as if it were a game in an attempt to ‘beat the system’. The resultant side effects are intended to attain higher inspection grades and a more favourable report from inspectors than would have been achieved without these deliberate and often seditious interventions.

Probably the most common example of these side effects from the author’s experience and from that found in the literature is ‘window dressing’. This is arguably an understandable intended behaviour, and in my experience as an inspector, has occurred in most formal inspections of education settings including schools, colleges, independent training providers and prisons alike. These behaviours are not difficult to identify or predict, being easily confirmed through conversations yielding comments such as *“this area hasn’t been painted for years, it was only done last week as the inspectors were coming”*.

Nevertheless, some institutions go to much greater lengths to obtain the best possible inspection outcome. The author has seen a variety of approaches including senior leaders directing managers, teaching staff and learners to reply with pre-prepared responses to inspectors and the observation of high quality lessons that learners later confirm they have never experienced prior to the week of the inspection. However, inspectors are highly aware of the potential for stage-managed gaming activities and take this into account in their arrangements for evidence gathering by using the techniques of triangulation and cross-referencing that almost always uncover these behaviours.

One technique to reduce the opportunities for gaming side-effects is to include in-built checks through audits of data relating to learner enrolment, attainment and progression. This type of data analysis, evaluated by experienced HM Inspectors and considered alongside the totality of evidence gathered, assists with the verification of findings to minimise the effects of behavioural influences. The approaches used during preparation, evidence gathering and the

evaluations based on triangulation mitigates, although can never entirely exclude, those attempts to subvert the inspection process through gaming behaviours. Overall, as Bamber and Stefani (2016) conclude, these tried and tested approaches are probably the most favoured methods to overcome side-effects;

“Valuable subjective judgements can be counterbalanced and complemented by theory, research data, and dialogue with stakeholders. Using appropriate theoretical backing, planning our evidence on an evidence grid, triangulating our sources, and making professional, situated, local judgements is a hard act to argue against.”

Bamber and Stefani, (2016:252)

As with the example of the health service highlighted previously, it should be acknowledged that some approaches to positively distort the outcomes of inspections in education institutions are potentially illegal and these are instances where data, documents or circumstances might be deliberately manipulated. This could include underrepresenting the number of learners enrolled on a course to show better than actual attainment based on the percentage of passes, or ensuring poor teaching staff are not available for observation during the inspection week. The scale of potential behaviours, from window dressing to fraud, are explored in more detail by de Wolf and Janssens (2007) and summarised below;

“The most well-known form of intended strategic behaviour is ‘window dressing’. This means the creation of proactive and reactive arrangements, which are generated simply and solely to be assessed more favourably by the supervisor. Sometimes, this form of strategic behaviour is so excessive that it constitutes a ‘misrepresentation’, or even ‘fraud’ and ‘deception’ (see for example Smith, 1993). Examples of the latter are false documents, helping pupils to do tests, excluding weak pupils from tests in order to increase the average test score and the reporting sick of weak teachers to prevent their lessons from being assessed.”

de Wolf and Janssens, (2007:382)

It is worth commenting that the notice period given to an institution for an inspection taking place is directly proportional to the time that the institution has to prepare for the inspection in whatever way it chooses. During this time, senior leaders will consider and decide on their range of options for intended strategic behaviours, based on motive and opportunity as outlined above.

This influence is reflected on as part of the study by Gaertner H. et al. (2013) which considered the preparation effects of school inspection and the design of school inspection processes, describing how in the German state of Baden-Württemberg schools are notified of inspections well in advance (1 to 2 years), explicitly so that the school can prepare (with support) for an inspection. Long notice periods for inspection clearly offer greater opportunity for both genuine preparation and also the implementation of any gaming strategies.

Within the existing literature there do not appear to be any parallel studies in Scottish further education and vocational training to reflect on. However, based on the overall purpose of the Scottish education inspection approach, which has the dual functions of scrutiny and support, HM Inspectors will make frequent visits to further education providers as part of their support activity and consequently know these institutions well. Furthermore, for further education colleges the previous arrangement of a week-long inspection every four years has now been replaced by a system of validated self-evaluation. This arrangement requires all colleges to publish a self-evaluation report containing self-appointed grades which are validated by Education Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council before publication. Therefore, for Scottish colleges the reporting and grading of individual institutions is less high-stakes than in other UK countries, given the on-going interaction with Education Scotland and lesser importance on independent public reporting. For other Scottish further education and vocational training sectors, such as Modern Apprenticeships, these reports do not identify individual institutions, also lowering the stakes in the context of a public report.

Overall, in post-school education in Scotland there is likely to be less incentive to introduce gaming behaviours, reducing the potential for negative side-effects and the consequences that might result from a poor inspection report.

Although, it is important to recognise that these influences may still exist in other sectors and other types of education inspection. In relation to validated self-evaluation for example, there remains a potential for institutions to overplay their strengths and understate their areas for development which is just as challenging for inspectors to ascertain during the validation process. It is necessary therefore to be remain aware that these effects may have some impact on this study, to a greater or lesser degree.

## 2.7 Establishing a link between school-based studies and themes in this research

The Ofsted publication ‘Schools That Stay Satisfactory’ (Ofsted, 2011) provides an interesting analysis of inspection data from secondary schools that seem to be stuck at a ‘*satisfactory*’ grading. This report attempts to understand why these schools have not improved, with a key and important finding that schools which are stuck at ‘*satisfactory*’ are most often failing to be consistent over time. This may be the consistency of improving targets, such as pupil attendance, or the consistency of applying a policy, such as marking guidelines or pupil behaviour. The report identifies those priorities that are most commonly required to improve inspection outcomes. These are categorised as; improving the quality of teaching, improving leadership and management and raising attainment. A significant finding of the report is that;

“Leaders and managers in these schools have often been unable to establish consistent quality and practice across enough of the school’s activities. These schools are characterised by securing improvements in some areas between one inspection and the next, but not in others - or new weaknesses emerge.”

Ofsted, (2011:5)

These schools were not deemed ‘*inadequate*’, which would have significant consequences, and the inspectors set out priorities for improvement in their inspection reports, which aimed to help these schools to improve. The most common priorities for improvement identified by inspectors were in relation to education practice, leadership and management, raising learner attainment and learner progression. Notably, the persistence of low attainment was associated with weak teaching (comprising education practice) and this in turn was linked to ineffective leadership of teaching at middle or senior management levels. These themes accord with the intentions for this research and later we will see how well the findings of Ofsted correlate with the findings from the practical elements of this study.

Given that the schools identified in the above example did not improve over time, particularly in relation to education practice and learner attainment, the approach of considering how well an institution responds to the findings of inspectors’ offers inspiration for defining the field work elements for this research. It may be possible to identify common priorities or aspects of education provision that are reported on by inspectors and evaluate how well an institution responded to these priorities.

## 2.8 Summary of findings from the literature review

When reviewing the literature and associated research into further education and vocational training, it has been found that the quantity of material available falls dramatically compared with the school-based sector, and within Scotland, it is found to be almost negligible.

This literature review also revealed that there are few relevant studies available that compare the common factors of inspection methodologies across UK further education with similar sectors, or with other countries. Clearly, there are multi-layered dimensions to identifying, and to an even greater extent defining, many of the variables required for a credible research study. For education

institutions, the differing missions, resources, location, demographics, diverse student populations and emphasis of curriculum provision, does not provide a robust basis for comparison.

We have observed the possible connections between schools with consistently '*satisfactory*' performance ratings and a set of common priorities identified by inspectors for school improvement. The identification of common priorities from external inspections and their influence on education practice and learner attainment is a convincing potential avenue for this research that will be considered carefully. Also, the work of Rosenthal suggest an interesting line of enquiry in that the inspection process might have negative effects on education practice and learner attainment.

What did become clear when investigating the background of inspection in the further education and training sector, is that UK education policy has become differentiated following the establishment of the newly devolved governments within each individual UK nation, particularly Scotland. Contemporary government documents presented a judicious source for a historical review and provide a good background to the understanding of the policy context. In this respect, there is a large quantity of material available for potential research, given the political significance for all governments of maintaining high educational standards.

The literature review also revealed detailed documentary evidence relating to the implementation of inspection approaches in the further education and vocational training sector. Although these documents provide a helpful source of actions taken, the review determined that there has been little analysis or long term interpretations behind the introduction of education policies, and no clear evidential base for linking scrutiny with institutional improvement. There is therefore, potential in exploring in more detail these aspects of education policy and inspection approaches, and later chapters follow through with this theme.

One positive line of enquiry was some freelance research that was commissioned by the SFC to evaluate their implementation of revised strategies for quality enhancement in the college sector (Critical Thinking, 2005; Subramanian et al., 2009a and 2009b). These reports provide useful formative and summative findings to inform the development of future strategy for the SFC and help with the consideration of context for this research.

Overall, apart from the school-based studies, the literature review did not reveal any meaningful insight into the relationship between inspection and its impact on education practice and learner attainment in the further education and vocational training sector. There do not appear to be any obvious motives for under-researching within this sector. It may be due to the fluidity of information around the transient study paths of further education learners, often opting in to and out of study and employment. Alternatively, the relatively short-term nature of further education and the difficulties in disaggregating precise attainment data based on the variety of individual units studied by learners. One possible argument is the recognition that school-based and university education attracts weightier political attention. Parental and media pressures on these sectors, fuelled by a league table culture, has provided a greater interest for researchers and this in turn generates evidence for political capital. In this regard, the inspection and public reporting on the quality of schools is much higher-stakes.

In summary, further education and vocational training has a unique place in the education spectrum and as a result, relatively few researchers appear to have undertaken enduring studies in this field.

## 2.9 Research considerations and approaches to this study

The review of literature presented here suggests that the further education and vocational training sector remains an under-researched field of study and overall, only a few research studies have been undertaken in relation to

inspection and improvement. Specifically, for Scottish further education and training provision there does not appear to be any known exploration of policy development or any detailed evaluation of the impact of inspection methodologies. This is supported by communication with other researchers in this field, in particular, Dr. Melanie Ehren (Reader) and Cecilia Ampuero (Researcher), both affiliated to the Institute of Education, University College London (UCL). In the absence of any formal research studies, it can be determined that there has been no notable research into the impact of inspection in the Scottish further education and training sector over the past twenty years. Therefore, any research in this field will be conducted almost without precedence.

The focus for this research appears to favour an approach that concentrates on the inspection arrangements in Scottish further education and vocational training since devolution, which would provide a reasonable timeframe for examination.

In subsequent chapters, we will explore further the factors that might influence the research methodology for this study, and in particular, the characteristics of measurement that impact on further education and vocational training in Scottish education institutions. This examination assisted the setting of research boundary definitions and provided a basis to establish key research questions.

Based on the potential opportunities for research outlined above, it can be concluded that taking this study forward is likely to provide a valuable contribution to researchers and policy makers when determining the impact and effectiveness of inspection in the contemporary Scottish further education and vocational training sector.



### 3. Chapter 3 Theoretical and Analytical Framework

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#### 3.1 Introduction

We have discovered from the literature review that there has been limited debate or analysis of key educational policies for further education and vocational training in Scotland since these responsibilities were passed to Scottish Ministers. Moreover, there is little evidence of any enquiry into the implementation and effectiveness of these policies. Potentially, all education policy is in the domain of this research; however, this would generate a very wide range of inquiry. To delimit this study, we will concentrate on Scottish further education and vocational training policy over the past ten years or so. Defining the boundaries in this way helps to focus the research through a relatively specific lens, signifying a pragmatic approach which as we will see, is in itself based on theoretical methods.

As we are working with a comparatively scarce literature base, it is necessary to partition the scope of this study by engaging approaches that allow the surveying and filtering of research material into appropriate themes. Using an analytical framework enables the implementation of acknowledged theoretical evaluation models to help explore, understand and develop our potential research themes.

In this chapter, we investigate and discuss the theoretical approaches to policy evaluation and an analytical tool known as the *logic model*, both of which are widely applied in analytical and theoretical contexts. Theoretical models such as these are used to establish a rational research methodology, develop the research scope and contribute towards a reasoned strategy for carrying out various phases of this study. This chapter aims to move along our understanding of the issues revealed in the literature methodologically, by refining the broad topic area and establish an overarching taxonomy that advances towards specific research priorities and themes.

The chapter concludes with the application of these theoretical and analytical approaches to the policies of the Scottish Government in the further education and vocational training sector to help position the research.

### 3.2 Analytical framework

This section reviews the analytical and theoretical approaches that are used to support the refining and defining of the research themes. It includes classical theoretical concepts along with more contemporary approaches such as the policy cycle and logic models.

#### 3.2.1 Analytical approaches for defining the research priorities

There is a very wide variety of research approaches available to researchers, as Mador et. al. (2016) point out;

“A myriad of methodological approaches to designing and implementing research priority setting processes have been published for a variety of contexts.”

Mador et al, (2016:2)

Given the wide choice of approaches available, it is important to select one that fits best with the overall aims and objectives of this study. Ultimately, we are interested in the effectiveness and impact of policies that are associated with the process of scrutiny. The effective measurement of policy impact and the achievement of policy aims will be essential in tracking and identifying whether a policy is, or is not, working as intended.

As we are considering a broadly sequential and process driven model of policy development and implementation, the basis of our investigation lends itself to a structured approach. Utilising a structured analysis allows for an examination of each element of each process separately and systematically. It also acknowledges alternative approaches, providing a more effective and comprehensive conclusion than an intuitive approach. Furthermore, structured

analysis by definition assists with the solution of problems by breaking them down into smaller challenges so that each can be solved individually, and that is why an analytical approach has been adopted for this element of the study.

Within this structured analytical approach, we need to establish a platform for the analysis of further education policies in order to make judgements about the effectiveness of these policies. It is anticipated that using policy evaluation, along with its associated tools, will provide better opportunities to survey the research field and to parcel up any findings, delimiting the research aims and scope to manageable proportions.

Overall, there is an intentional and conscious research design in selecting an analytical perspective that is centred on policy evaluation principles. Within this context, it is accepted that these principles are closely related to, but distinguishable from, more traditional social research.

### 3.2.2 Policy evaluation

Most commonly, policy evaluation takes place within political and organisational contexts and there is broad consensus that the primary aim of this type of evaluation is to influence policy formulation and decision-making through the provision of empirically driven feedback. The systematic approach of policy evaluation models depicts the interrelationships between policies and practices, and identifies criteria that can be used in evaluating the effectiveness of the policies under consideration.

Policy analysis and policy evaluation may incorporate similar processes; however, they should not be regarded as equivalent. Meiring (n.d.) determines that;

“It can be deduced that policy analysis comprises conception, operation and the collection of information to ultimately establish a frame of reference which makes analysis and eventually evaluation possible.”

Meiring, (n.d.:2)

and Meiring, (n.d.) also states;

“Evaluation is seen as an assessment, an appraisal of something of value, according to a specific yardstick which also serves as a standard.”

Meiring, (n.d.:3)

Whilst ubiquitous in contemporary policy practice, policy evaluation approaches have their origin in academic work on decision-making. In particular, it is found in the post-war work of Herbert A Simon who was a noteworthy creative influence and prominent management scholar. Simon unified studies of decision-making across a wide range of fields including cognitive psychology, cognitive science, computer science, public administration, economics, management, philosophy of science, sociology, and political science. Many of Simon’s key concepts remain current today (Huppertz, 2015) and these are introduced below.

Simon contributed extensively as an interdisciplinary scholar to a wide variety of research fields, including computer science and artificial intelligence and it is not feasible to review and comment on all of Simon’s related work. For the purposes of this research, we will consider his core contributions towards research into the decision-making process, for which he received the Nobel Memorial Award in 1978.

Behrooz (2010) summarises what was potentially Simon’s most influential contributions;

“His ideas on human decision making and problem solving, as well as bounded rationality and causal reasoning, are considered his unique contributions to management. He profoundly challenged our fundamental assumptions on human cognition. His central goal was to explain the nature and mechanism of thought process that people use in making decisions.”

Behrooz, (2010:510)

Simon studied closely the decision making patterns within organisations and concluded that decision-making behaviour did not have the same association with the *rational theories* previously accepted by classical and neoclassical theorists. Based on his own knowledge of behaviour theory, he went on to develop and communicate new theories around behavioural realism, such as *bounded rationality* and his neologism *satisficing* (an integration of satisfy and suffice).

It should be recognised that not everyone agrees fully with the value of Simon's work (Harstad and Selten, 2013), it is nonetheless clearly of some significance.

“However, generations of scholars proposing boundedly rational approaches to economic analysis have not as yet led us to a coherent body of behaviour-based (as opposed to optimization-based) theory that can offer a legitimate challenge to the primacy of neoclassical theory in economics scholarship, teaching, and policy analysis.”

Harstad and Selten, (2013:497)

Simon's concepts remain relevant to this research as it can be argued that contemporary models of policy evaluation have their origins in his seminal book *Administrative Behavior*, (Simon, 1997), which is now in its fourth edition. As Augier (2002) points out in a review of Simon's latest edition, his work is as relevant to political science and even to organisation theory, as it is to economics;

“Simon argued that organisations make it possible to make decisions by virtue of the fact that they constrain the set of alternatives to be considered. Organisations can be improved by improving the ways in which those limits are defined and imposed.”

Augier, (2002:387)

Essentially, Simon is acknowledging that organisations have, by definition, boundaries and these boundaries set delimiting factors for their aims, objectives, strategies and resultant policies. By understanding the definition of

these regulating factors, managers, and policy makers can understand better the decision-making processes within their organisations. Furthermore, by flexing these factors appropriately, organisational improvements may be achieved. However, Simon also acknowledged that his approach is based on an “*ideal*” model of organisational behaviour and in reality; managers are compelled to find the “*best fit*” or, in some circumstances, a “*least worse*” option. This reality is played out regularly in organisations when they choose to make improvements, or are impelled to by external factors such as legislation or scrutiny. These factors relating to organisational improvement are important to note, as we will observe later in this study.

Further discussion on Simon’s works is beyond the scope of this research, however, we will see in later chapters that policy development, policy aims, regulating factors and organisational improvement are all correlated with one another.

Based on the intrinsic necessity to evaluate policy, Simon’s academic work has been applied to, and universally embedded in, contemporary policy evaluation guidance. By definition, a policy is a programme of actions adopted by a person, group, or government and the impact of policy implementation is commonly assessed through policy evaluation. Organisational objectives and improvements are achieved by translating strategies and aims into action through the development and implementation of a policy. Therefore, in order to assess the true impact of policies it is necessary to make an assessment, or evaluation, of the actual outcomes against those intended.

Prominent organisations such as the World Bank, UNESCO and HM Treasury, have all incorporated Simon’s classic approaches in their guidance documents. For example, the World Bank (2004) provides a comprehensive overview of tools, methods and approaches for policy evaluation including; their purpose and use, advantages and disadvantages, costs, skills and time required. This guidance exemplifies the wide variety of evaluation methods available, including;

performance indicators, logical frameworks, theory-based evaluation, formal surveys, rapid appraisal methods, participatory methods, public expenditure tracking surveys, cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis and impact evaluation. Some of these approaches have wide-ranging applicability, while others are quite narrow in their use and it will be necessary to separate out the best methods available to use in this research.

UNESCO (2015) have added another concept to reflect on when evaluating policies, that of “*evaluability*”, emphasising that during the early design stages of a policy, there should always be consideration of how the policy will be assessed post-implementation. The notion of *evaluability* is certainly an important factor to reflect on when evaluating policy and establishing evaluation criteria for this research.

**“Evaluability:** the extent to which an activity or a programme can be evaluated in a reliable, valid and credible fashion.”

UNESCO, (2015a:Annex 1)

UNESCO (2015b) also summarise the elements of programme, or policy<sup>3</sup> evaluation in their Evaluation Manual with the following helpful overview;

“Programme evaluation makes it possible to ‘observe’ a programme and evaluate the balance among the following three qualities:”

Quality desired:	Objectives
Quality provided:	Results
Quality perceived:	Judgement

UNESCO, (2015b:Section 1)

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<sup>3</sup> The terms policy and programme in many texts and circumstances can be interpreted as interchangeable.

We will return to these themes later when we consider the techniques for evaluating policies and draw on the strands of intended policy (objectives), a form of output (results) and an evaluation (judgement).

For the United Kingdom, HM Treasury have established clear and concise guidance for policy evaluation in its Magenta Book (H.M. Treasury, 2011). The Magenta Book is the recommended central government guidance on evaluation that sets out best practice for policy makers and analysts when conducting evaluations of policies and delivery of services. The Magenta Book is complemented with HM Treasury's Green Book (H.M. Treasury, 2018) and together they provide detailed guidelines, for policy makers and analysts, on how policies and projects should be assessed and reviewed.

There is much written on the theory and practice of policy evaluation as developed from Simon's original concepts and organisational modelling. In the next section, we will look in more detail at the guidance of HM Treasury as a foundation to explore further the principles of policy evaluation and introduce the policy cycle.

### 3.3 The Policy Cycle

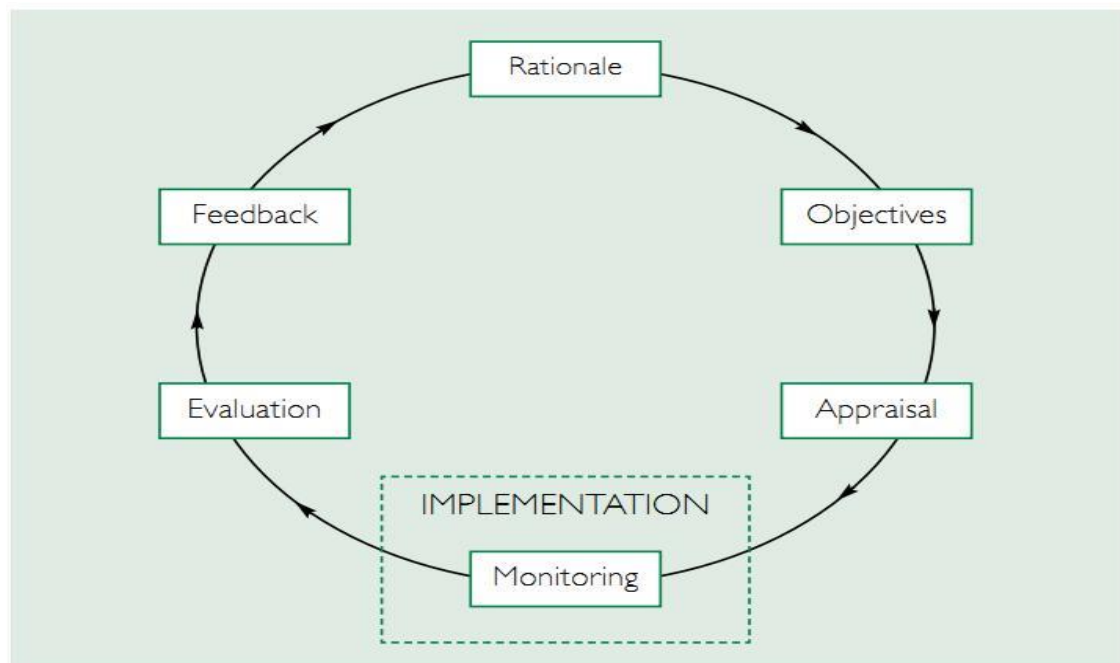
As the world around us continually changes, the new and revised policies of governments and organisations need to be evaluated appropriately to ensure they are achieving their desired objectives. Generally, this evaluation is supported by applying the principles of a *policy cycle*, which is a systematic process represented graphically, to provide a framework from which we can conceptualise and evaluate the policy process. The policy cycle is widely known and acknowledged as an integral part of policy development and evaluation. For further insights and details on policy evaluation, Newcomer et. al., (2015) provide an informative academic overview.



The HM Treasury's Green Book (H.M. Treasury, 2018) presents a recommended framework for the appraisal and evaluation of all policies, programmes and projects termed the Rationale, Objectives, Appraisal, Monitoring, Evaluation, Feedback (ROAMEF) cycle. Application of the policy cycle is formalised in the Green Book and its principles are advocated by the UK Government to ensure policy makers obtain verification on whether policies are achieving their aims and objectives. The policy cycle sets out the key stages in the development of a policy proposal, from the articulation of the rationale for intervention and the setting of objectives, through to options appraisal and, eventually, implementation and evaluation including the feeding back of evaluation evidence.

The ROAMEF cycle, illustrated in Figure 1, is a proven, sequential, robust and systematic evaluation process that follows a logical process. Proponents of the ROAMEF cycle claim that it provides a bridge between public policy and private sector delivery, which in turn operates in a space described by the political, economic, social, technical, legal and environmental factors of the public realm.

**Figure 1** The Rationale, Objectives, Appraisal, Monitoring, Evaluation, Feedback (ROAMEF) Cycle



ROAMEF, (2016)

It can be seen from Figure 1 that the rationale and objectives of a policy are determined at the outset, along with decisions on how the policy might be best appraised. Once implemented, the policy is monitored using established appraisal criteria for success and subsequently evaluated. The findings of this evaluation can then be fed back to compare with the original rationale and intentions of the policy in order to decide whether modification or improvements are required. Alternatively, the policy may no longer be fit for purpose and would need to be amended or withdrawn. The cycle as illustrated fits very well with the approach anticipated for this research and the next section explores how the evaluation elements of the cycle may be extended to explore further the impact and results of a particular policy.

The advantages of using the ROAMEF cycle of analysis allows us to divide policy making and policy implementation into discrete steps and focus more clearly on the design and scope of this study. One of the several benefits of using this cycle for analysis is identified by the Magenta Book as;

“to provide accountability, by demonstrating how funding has been spent, what benefits were achieved, and assessing the return on resources.”

H.M. Treasury, (2011:12)

The consideration of value-for-money and accountability is one, which we explored earlier in the literature review, and as indicated is an important factor in policy development and decision-making. For example, an education policy may simultaneously aim to improve the academic attainment and skills for work of learners, which in turn would lead ideally to a better educated, work ready society that would advance economic prosperity. In this case however, measuring and evaluating the overall economic contribution of the policy would be remarkably difficult. We will observe this effect in the next chapter. This aspect is also considered in the Magenta Book, and of particular relevance to this research is to ask what difference a policy has made (H.M. Treasury, 2011:8) and this is classified as “*impact evaluation*”. As the Magenta Book affirms;

“Answering the question of what difference a policy has made involves a focus on the outcomes of the policy. Outcomes are those measurable achievements which either are themselves the objectives of the policy - or at least contribute to them - and the benefits they generate.”

H.M. Treasury, (2011:18)

Impact evaluation focuses attention on the outcomes of a policy and any benefits generated beyond financial implications. This is particularly applicable to this research, as we wish to examine the impact of inspection and any associated positive or negative consequences.

A secondary and important aspect of evaluation worthy of consideration and outlined in the Magenta Book (H.M. Treasury, 2011:19) is to explore the potential impact of not having a policy. This is termed *counterfactual*.

“The key characteristic of a good impact evaluation is that it recognises that most outcomes are affected by a range of factors, not just the policy. To test the extent to which the policy was responsible for the change, it is necessary to estimate - usually on the basis of (often quite technical) statistical analysis of quantitative data - what would have happened in the absence of the policy. This is known as the counterfactual.”

H.M. Treasury, (2011:19)

In its simplest form, counterfactual relates to what has not happened and counterfactual thinking is generally acknowledged as the dominant analytical process in political science and economics. For policy evaluation, counterfactual analysis involves making a comparison between the outcomes of interest for those having benefitted from a policy and a control group. The control group are not exposed to the policy and this provides information on what might happen to those influenced by the policy had they not been exposed to it - this is the counterfactual case. As Yarlett and Ramscar (n.d) observe;

“In the alternatives envisaged by a counterfactual some things are clearly going to differ from the way they are in the actual world, while others are going to remain unchanged. And specifying which things will be affected, and which things will be unaffected, by a counterfactual supposition is the crux of the issue.”

Yarlett and Ramscar, (n.d.:2)

We will see that in relation to this research, a counterfactual case would not be an option as the nature of the further education and training sector defines that no two institutions will be exactly the same, for many reasons.

Using established methods such as the ROAMEF cycle and impact evaluation, allows us to disaggregate policy making and policy implementation into individual stages and provide an analytical focus for this research. However, we

also need to consider more specifically, the type of evaluation that will best suit our research approach as each type has a different purpose and characteristic. By considering the theories of evaluation methods at this stage, we will be better able to determine the optimal type of evaluation approach for our research.

### 3.4 Policy evaluation strategies

In order to introduce further granularity into our research approach, this section divides the policy cycle down and explores a set of techniques that are commonly used to evaluate policies. There are numerous strategies and techniques available for designing and planning evaluation methods and an evaluation design requires consideration of the balance between resources available (time and cost), accuracy, reliability and generalisation of results.

Policy evaluations are generally conducted from one, or a selected combination of, *evaluation viewpoints* that are evidenced using *evaluation criteria*. Table 4 (reproduced from JICA, 2004) sets out a matrix of evaluation options and their domain of application. We will briefly examine each of these elements to provide an awareness of the evaluation alternatives and determine the most appropriate approach to policy evaluation for this research.

**Table 4 Differences in evaluation viewpoints for each project evaluation type with evaluation criteria**

Evaluation Viewpoints	Ex-ante evaluation	Monitoring Note 2	Mid-term evaluation	Terminal evaluation	Ex-post evaluation
Confirmation of performance	- Note 1	•	•	•	➤
Grasping of implementation process	○	•	•	•	➤
<Evaluation Criteria>					
Relevance	•	-	•	•	➤
Effectiveness	○	-	➤	•	-
Efficiency	○	-	•	•	-
Impact	○	-	➤	➤	•
Sustainability	○	-	○	○	•

- Examination based on the actual situation and performance
- Examination based on forecasts and prospects
- Examination according what is judged necessary and possible for the evaluation
- Full examination is not yet possible, or completed in a previous phase

Note 1: In case of an ex-ante evaluation, this means conducting a baseline study or establishing indicators.

Note 2: An examination based on the five evaluation criteria is normally beyond the scope of monitoring, but for its operation and management, it is important to keep these five evaluation criteria's viewpoints always in mind.

JICA, (2004:116)

Overall, we can see that the evaluation types may be partitioned into three broad phases which are; the development stages (ex-ante), during implementation (monitoring, mid-term and terminal) and at some time after implementation (ex-ante). As each approach is conducted at a different stage of the policy cycle, the evaluation outcomes reveal a different perspective

depending on the purpose of the evaluation. We will return to the two boxes shaded green later in this chapter.

For each of the evaluation viewpoints, we can observe options for five common evaluation criteria, the depth and the focus of which are dependent on the desired intention of the evaluation study. It is important to understand how each of the elements may influence the nature of the evaluation in order to select the most appropriate approach. Let us consider first of all, the three broad phases outlined above in turn.

#### 3.4.1 Ex-ante appraisal

Ex-ante evaluation is a process that supports the preparation of proposals for a new, or renewal of, an expiring policy. Its purpose is to gather information and carry out analyses that help to define objectives, to ensure that these objectives can be met, that the instruments used are cost-effective and that reliable later evaluation will be possible. Other terms, such as appraisal, policy analysis, impact assessment and feasibility study are also widely used to refer to practices similar to that of ex-ante evaluation. As ex-ante evaluation occurs before implementing a policy, when options for policy formulation are still open, this approach is not considered relevant for this research.

#### 3.4.2 Monitoring

Monitoring takes place during the life cycle of a project or policy, just after, during or immediately at the end of its implementation. Conventionally, the purpose of monitoring is to check whether activities are performed and outputs produced as planned, allowing adjustments and improvements to be made as necessary. Before policy monitoring takes place, it is necessary to establish who monitors what and when, and through what kind of decision-making process in order to verify outputs, activities, compare outputs with inputs, and verify any important assumptions. As we are exploring policies in this research that have

been implemented for some time, this approach is not one that will be entirely appropriate for this study.

### 3.4.3 Ex-post evaluation

Ex-post evaluations verify whether and how the intended outcomes of a policy are continuing after a given period of time. The results of such an evaluation can be used to make judgements about the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of a policy. Additionally, recommendations from the evaluation and lessons learned may be used to create improvements to existing policies or taken into consideration when developing replacement policies.

### 3.4.4 Evaluation criteria

As we are essentially interested in education policies that are already in place and have been implemented for a number of years, the ex-ante and monitoring approaches are less suitable and the ex-post evaluation is considered the best-fit methodology to employ. We can now consider what the evaluation criteria will offer in support of this approach.

Table 4 illustrates that for all evaluation viewpoints there is an opportunity to conduct examinations using a set of five evaluation criteria; relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. A full synopsis of the five evaluation criteria for each of the evaluation types is beyond the scope of this study and the focus will be on the type of evaluation viewpoint that is most appropriate for this research.

Returning to the green shaded boxes in Table 4, we can observe that ex-post evaluations focus on two of the five evaluation criteria, which are; “*impact*” and “*sustainability*”. As we are interested in the effectiveness and impact of education policy, the evaluation criteria of *impact* will be the most relevant to this study and is summarised as follows;



**Impact** an evaluation of how the level of achievement compares with the objectives of the policy and an assessment of any causal relationships.<sup>4</sup>

Adapted from JICA, (2004:193-194)

Using the evaluation criteria of impact within an ex-post evaluation approach will offer a methodology to help answer some of the key questions around the effectiveness of education policy in relation to; what works, what does not, where and most importantly, why? We now need to think more closely about how to refine the research field into smaller and more manageable sections and for that we will turn to another well-documented analytical praxis, the logic model.

### 3.5 Analytical refinement using Logic Models

This section establishes a link between the process of policy implementation monitored through the policy cycle and further refinement of variables into the themes of; what we are going to investigate, why it is interesting and how we are going to carry out the investigation. The *logic model* is a tool to assist in this refinement process and helps to establish a link between policy aims and evaluation criteria. Using this approach, we are able to begin positioning the research and to develop a research plan.

#### 3.5.1 An introduction to Logic Models

A *logic model* is a theory-based planning model that assists with applying theoretical concepts to simplify an evaluation or to plan a process (Langlois and Hallam, 2010). Logic models range from the simple to complex, employing a

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<sup>4</sup> When evaluating impact, it is important to check any causal relationships of the policy to determine whether the impact was caused by the policy itself, as it may be easily influenced by factors other than the project or synergy effects from other policies.

variety of resources and tools and are used to demonstrate how a process is designed to achieve its intended outcomes. Using a logic model to examine and interpret various interactions involved in implementing a policy, we can distill specific elements of interest to our inquiry. This leads to a better understanding of how key stakeholders and practitioners might envision, interpret, implement and respond to a given policy. In its simplest form, Anderson et. al. (2011) describe the logic model as;

“a graphic description of a system and is designed to identify important elements and relationships within that system.”

Anderson et. al., (2011:34)

They go on to say;

“For program evaluators, a logic model forms the basis for a process evaluation to assess the implementation of program components as planned (Helitzer et. al., 2010). It also provides evaluators with a means to document whether desired changes have been achieved based on specified outcome measures.”

Anderson et. al., (2011:34)

As Anderson et. al. (2011) identify above, a logic model can be illustrated graphically, similar to the policy cycle, to provide a visual representation of how a programme or policy is intended to work and what results are anticipated. To support this explanation further Genesee (n.d.) describes the fundamental operation of logic models as follows;

“If a Condition (problem) exists then resources and Activities are needed to create certain Outcomes and if certain outcomes are achieved then long term environmental or social change Impact (solution) will be realized.”

Genesee, (n.d.:1)

Figure 2 exemplifies this relationship in graphical form.

**Figure 2                      A Simple Logic Model**



Genesee, (n.d.:1)

As we can see from Figure 2, a logic model consists of a sequential series of relationships that connect the condition under consideration through the planned activities to resultant outcomes, which in due course lead to the expectant change - called the impact. This offers a theoretical approach to planning and evaluating how a policy is intended to work and what results might be expected. In the case of this research, it will be helpful to use the logic model format in Figure 2 to identify how policies are intended to perform, what activities they generate, what the intended outcomes are and what impact they have. We can therefore devise a logic model to set out a process to evaluate the impact of inspection policy and examine whether the inspection process performs as planned.

### 3.5.2 Theory into practice

The value of creating a logic model to clarify both the analytical and conceptual approaches to this research is supported further by the stages outlined in Anderson et. al., (2011) identified in Table 5.

**Table 5      Added value of using logic models in systematic reviews**

<b>Stages of a Review</b>	<b>Activities</b>
<b>Scoping the review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refining review question</li> <li>• Deciding on lumping or splitting a review topic</li> <li>• Identifying intervention components</li> </ul>
<b>Defining and conducting the review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying relevant study inclusion/exclusion criteria</li> <li>• Guiding the literature search strategy</li> <li>• Explaining the rationale behind surrogate outcomes used in the review</li> <li>• Justifying need for subgroup analyses (e.g., age, sex/gender, socioeconomic status)</li> </ul>
<b>Making the review relevant to policy and practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structuring reporting of results</li> <li>• Illustrating how harms and feasibility are connected with interventions</li> <li>• Interpreting results based on intervention theory and systems thinking</li> </ul>

Anderson et al., (2011:35)

Table 5 demonstrates that in scoping this research, a logic model will assist with defining the research stages, refining the broader research activities and channelling these activities into more explicit research questions. This will provide for a more manageable research project that can be completed within the scope of the available time and resources, a satisficing approach. The last portion of Table 5, concerning reporting and interpretation of results, is a particular consideration in relation to my role as a researcher. Potentially, there may be ethical issues raised as I have the dual roles of being employed under conditions of government policy and being an impartial academic researcher interpreting and reporting my research findings. These issues are explored in more detail in chapter 5.

In order to help create a logic model to evaluate the impact of further education and vocational training policies introduced by the Scottish Government, we can turn to the Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation mentioned earlier (Newcomer et. al., 2015). This provides a comprehensive evaluation and analysis of the use of logic models and describes how they are helpful in defining, measuring and monitoring policy performance.

Using the guidance provided in the Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation (Newcomer et. al., 2015:chapter 3) the author has developed in Table 6 the elements of a logic model that outlines common properties for the main stakeholders involved; inspection agencies, governments and institutions. These details have been established from the two principal sets of further education inspection arrangements in the UK, Ofsted and Education Scotland (Ofsted, 2015; Education Scotland, n.d.a).

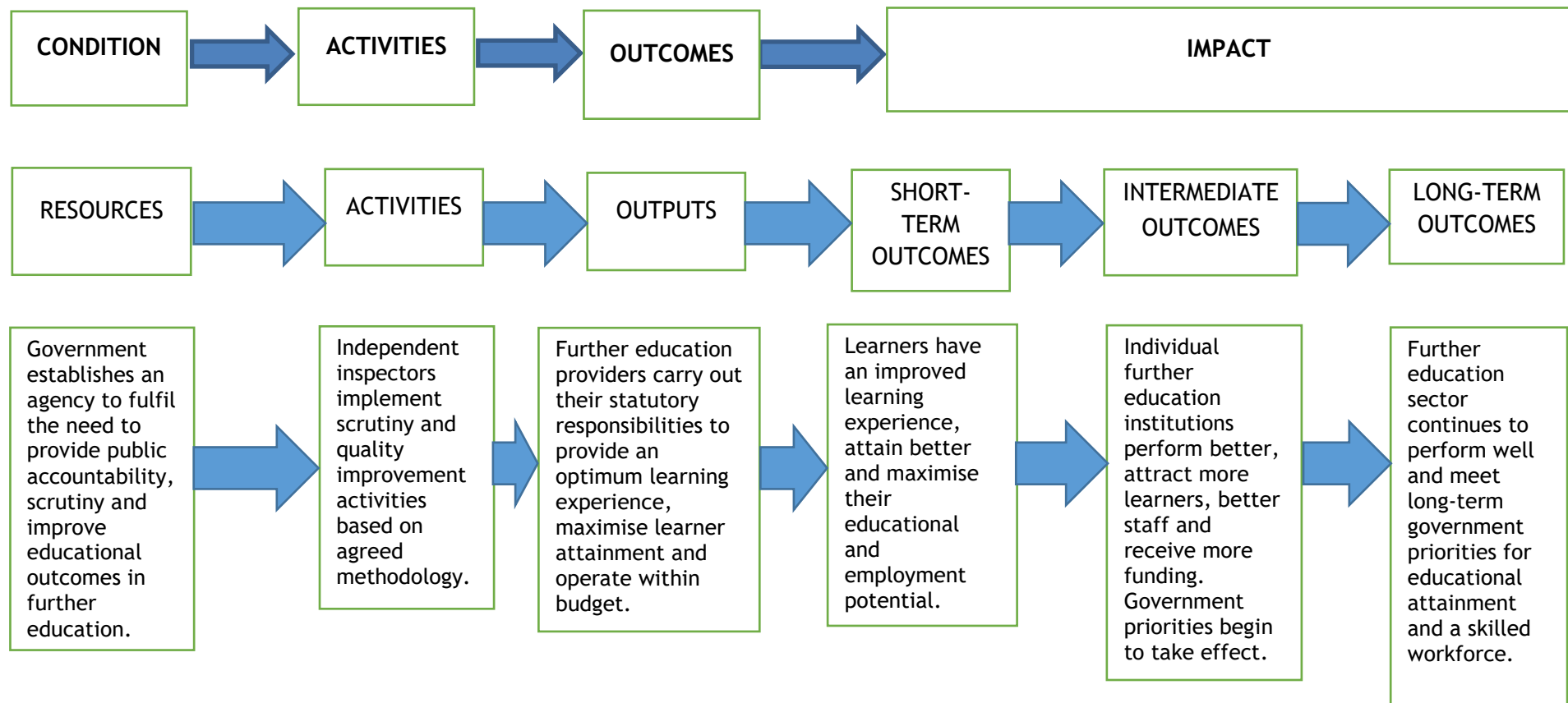
By developing these elements further, alongside the corresponding stakeholder properties in Table 6, the author has gone on to produce a logic model that focuses on inspection policy, and this is illustrated in Figure 3.

**Table 6**                      **The elements for a logic model interpreted from the frameworks of the Ofsted and Education Scotland inspection frameworks.**

	STAKEHOLDERS and CORRESPONDING PROPERTIES		
ELEMENTS	Inspection Agency	Government	Institutions
Activities	<p>Evaluate how efficiently and effectively education and training provision meets learners' needs.</p> <p>Evaluate impact of provision on outcomes and identify priorities for improvement.</p> <p>Provide users with information about the quality of education and training provision.</p> <p>Provide professional challenge.</p> <p>Provide independent scrutiny for the public.</p> <p>Identify and share best practice.</p>	<p>Distribution of funds.</p> <p>Setting policy direction.</p> <p>Setting specific priorities. E.g. increasing employment opportunities.</p> <p>Where appropriate, apply sanctions to provision.</p> <p>Inform users about the quality of providers.</p> <p>Support and champion specific government priorities such as Developing the Young Workforce policies or narrowing the achievement gap.</p> <p>Promote value for money.</p>	<p>Implementing improvement actions for learners.</p> <p>Benchmarking with other providers.</p> <p>Ensuring that statutory duties are carried out efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>Improving outcomes.</p> <p>Actively promote legislative requirements e.g. equality and diversity, discrimination, safeguarding and PREVENT.</p>

<b>Outputs</b>	Public accountability.  Improving education and training provision.	Meeting the needs of the users.  Meeting the needs of stakeholders.	Quality improvement and self-assessment.  Performance measurement  Improve teaching, learning and assessment.  Improving the effectiveness of leadership and management
<b>Short-term Outcomes</b>	Publication of performance indicator data and public reports  Publication of strengths and areas for development in provision	Performance indicators are of primary importance to Ministers, College Principals, Governing Boards and Scottish Government officials, as well as employers, staff, students and parents.	Institutional quality improvement  Funding increase or no sanctions
<b>Medium- term Outcomes</b>	Publication of trends in improvement  Publication of best practice	More efficient use of resources  Regional improvements	Improved student outputs
<b>Long-term Outcomes</b>		UK wide improvements	Recognition as a quality institution.  Attract better quality staff
<b>EXTERNAL INFLUENCES AND EXTERNAL CONTEXT</b>			
Changes in government priorities, government funding or political emphasis, political party priorities, geo-political status and overall health of the country.			

**Figure 3** Logic Model interpretation of government policy with three-stage outputs





It would be possible to develop this logic model still further to incorporate more detail, such as the quality of policy implementation in addition to its impact. However, for this research the logic model satisfies, in the terminology of Herbert A Simon, as it has exposed a sufficient number of considerations that are applicable to this research.

### 3.5.3 Applying the Logic Model to this research

Here we consider how external factors identified in Figure 3 might influence the application of the logic model for this research.

Table 6 also included broader factors underpinning the elements and properties, which are based primarily on government and political variations, and these set the external context. These external factors can be unpredictable and have a significant influence on the activities identified within the logic model. It is essential therefore to consider the role of these driving and restraining factors in shaping the intended outcome of inspection policy, as they set out the bounded rationality in which the policy evaluation takes place.

There is also the concept of '*reach*'. This refers to how far the processes and methodologies identified in the logic model '*reach*' or interact with organisations and society. In our investigation, this relates to the effects of, and effects on, teaching staff, curriculum teams, senior managers, learners, parents, employers and government agencies. We observed some of the effects of '*reach*' in the work of Rosenthal, whereby unintended pressure on teaching staff is thought to have had a negative influence on the outcome of inspections.

It is important therefore to define any driving and restraining factors, along with any ‘*reach*’ effects, to explore the potential influence they may have on policies that are designed to inspect and support improvement in an educational setting. At this point, we will note the existence of these factors and summarise those most relevant to this research in Table 7.

**Table 7      A summary of some of the factors influencing the activities within the logic model of Figure 3**

<b>Driving factors</b>	Government assurance and accountability, impact and effectiveness, social and political pressure, policy development.
<b>Restraining factors</b>	Institutions understanding and ability to change, accuracy of inspection methodology, believers - those that believe in inspection and those that do not view scrutiny as a positive activity.
<b>Reach</b>	Awarding bodies, learners, regional boards, parents, employers, media, first and third party funders,

We have seen in this section how a logic model can be developed to assist our evaluation of policy design, implementation and impact and how this approach can be used to focus the scope of the research in this study. The next section moves on to consider how this model might be used in practice and position the research going forward.

### 3.6      Positioning the research

We have seen that the use of policy evaluation tools and logic models help us to break down the research into smaller parcels, focussing the scope of the research and providing an indication of how the research might be conducted. We can now begin to apply these abstract approaches to locate this research within the overall aim of evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the inspection process on education practice and learner attainment.

During the early stages of this research, we have observed two distinct elements begin to emerge. One of these was not necessarily expected, involving the exploration of policy influences and policy impact within Scottish further education. The second element relating to a practical investigation into the effects of inspection is the one anticipated and this, by definition, is rooted in the overall idea for this research.

### 3.6.1 Research themes

Consideration of the theoretical and analytical approaches has helped to narrow the research scope towards an *ex-post evaluation* limited to the evaluation criteria of *impact* as the most appropriate way forward. Using an adaptation of an approach set out in JICA (2004) the author has developed a summary in Table 8 to illustrate how ex-post evaluation with a focus on impact fits well with the research aim of exploring policy context and evaluating policy.

**Table 8**      **Evaluation checkpoints for Scottish further education and training policy using an ex-post evaluation and evaluation criteria of impact**

Evaluation Item	Evaluation Checkpoint
Impact	<p><u>Achievement level of the overall policy goal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are policies for the inspection of further education in Scotland achieving their goals compared with their aims?</li> <li>• How are the national objectives for Scottish further education influenced by the achievement of the policies implemented?</li> <li>• Do further education policies in Scotland contribute to the resolution of development issues?</li> <li>• What are the impeding and contributing factors for the achievement of policy goals for Scottish further education?</li> </ul> <p><u>Causal relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the overall policy goal an impact that was produced through the implementation of the policies in Scottish further education?</li> <li>• Are the important assumptions from the purpose of further education policies in Scotland to the overall policy goals correct? Is there no influence from important assumptions?</li> </ul> <p><u>Ripple effects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any positive or negative impacts beside the overall policy goals?</li> <li>• Influence on the development of other policies, laws, systems, standards, and the like.</li> <li>• Influence on social and cultural aspects such as gender, human rights, rich and poor.</li> <li>• Economical influence on the target society, concerned parties, beneficiaries</li> <li>• Are there different impacts depending on differences between genders, ethnic groups, or social layers (particularly unintended consequences)?</li> </ul>

Developed from JICA, (2004:194)

The approach suggested has the potential to uncover any identifiable connections between the intentions and outcomes of further education and vocational training policy in Scotland. The evaluation checkpoints identified in Table 8 will need to be refined further, however they are a useful starting point in defining the scope of the policy evaluation and context of this study.

### 3.6.2 Further refinement of the research themes

Naturally, with the best intentions for the design and implementation of any policy, there will be questions and concerns by stakeholders and different groups. This is particularly acute after the policy design stage, when any unpredicted challenges emerge in the policy methodology and in the ways a policy is implemented. The concept of education policy as a sequential process has been questioned and superseded by a more sophisticated approach (Ball and Bowe, 1992). They suggest that policy implementation and resultant actions should be considered as interlinked and progressive, rather than exhibiting a simple consecutive interrelation. Essentially the work of Ball and Bowe (1992) is a refinement of the logic model approach and they define three states of policy configuration. The author has developed these three states in Table 9 to illustrate that when a policy is introduced with given intentions, its impact is more often than not diluted and the impact may take on new, and sometimes unintended, directions.

**Table 9      The three stages of policy implementation**

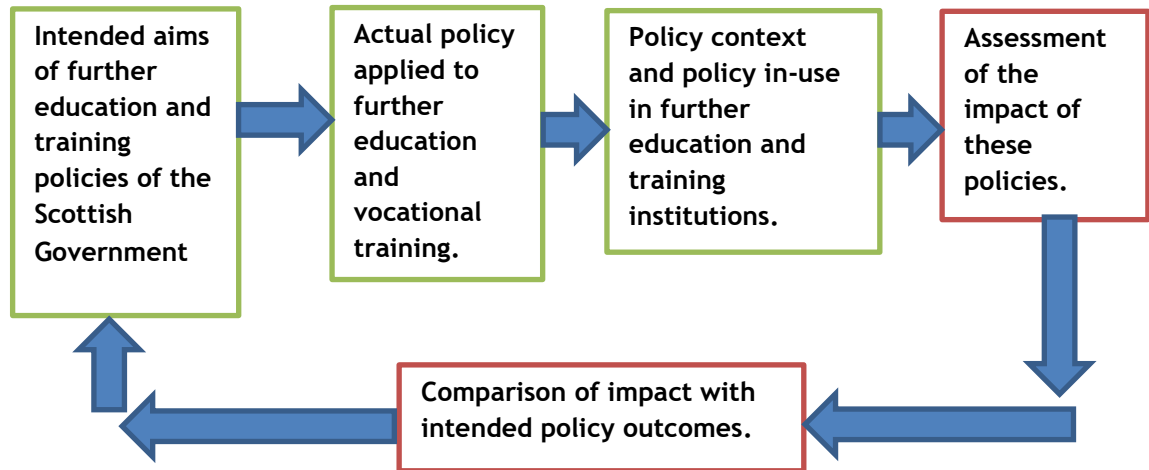
STAGES	EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTATION
<b>Intended policy:</b>	There will be a variety of 'official', competing ideologies that seek to affect how the policy is implemented.
<b>Actual policy:</b>	Policy documents draw attention to the wording of legislation and the policy text sets out the ground rules for policy in-use.
<b>Policy in-use:</b>	The institutional practices that emerge out of the responses by practitioners to the intended policy outcomes. The actual outcomes are grounded in the peculiarities and particularities of the context within which these practitioners operate along with their perceptions of the intended and actual policies in-use.

Developed from Ball and Bowe, (1992:100)

We can see that as policy implementation progresses through the stages identified in Table 9, there is scope for wider interpretation of the policy details with subsequent variations in converting the intended outcomes into reality. If we consider policy implementation as a system, with inherent dynamic processes, it is possible to explore the various interactions between government legislation, policy makers, educational leaders, institutional policy and through to the intended, and unintended, outcomes of a policy itself.

We can now refine the logic model further by developing the stages from Table 9 as a basis for the evaluation of the effectiveness of policy implementation. Figure 4 is a logic model that the author has developed for this research using the principles of the policy cycle and logic models described earlier and incorporating the stages of policy evaluation developed from Ball and Bowe (1992).

**Figure 4** A logic model for the evaluation of further education and vocational training policy in Scottish education



Developed from Ball and Bowe, (1992)

The logic model in Figure 4 provides a helpful summary of the processes for the evaluation of Scottish Government further education and vocational training policy. However, we still need to consider how well such an evaluation would contribute to the investigation of the principal research aim relating to the impact of inspection.

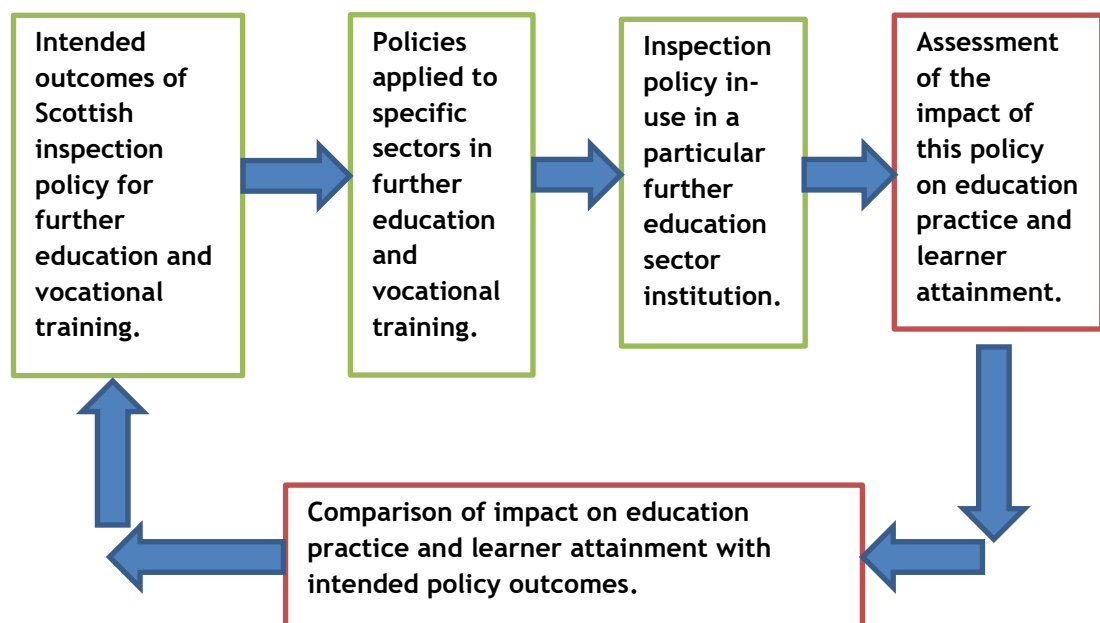
### 3.6.3 Policy evaluation and the impact of inspection

The analytical approaches described have the potential to provide a summary of the context, and to some extent an evaluation of, the further education and vocational training policies implemented by the Scottish Government. However, the principal aim of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of inspection policy on education practice and learner attainment. Using the theoretical and analytical approaches described earlier in this chapter, we can now plan the way forward for the practical aspects of investigating this aim.

It would be too great a challenge for this research to consider all Scottish policies related to further education and vocational training and it is necessary

to channel the enquiry into one specific sector to ensure the research is manageable. Therefore, the author has developed a second logic model to outline an investigation into the impact of Scottish Government policies relating to our core interest of the inspection process employed in further education and vocational training. This is illustrated in Figure 5.

**Figure 5** A logic model for measuring the impact of Scottish inspection approaches in further education and vocational training



We now have two strands of research mapped out and can go on to develop plans for carrying out the review of policies and the practical aspects of this study.

### 3.7 Developing the research plan

This section develops proposals for taking the practical aspects of this research forward based on the theoretical and analytical approaches considered earlier. This section marks a distinction between the abstract discussion of previous sections and the application of these approaches to the research context. The



section concludes with a summary of the research intentions and how these will be navigated going forward.

### 3.7.1 Policy context and evaluation

The first strand of this research is policy context and evaluation, with a central focus on Scottish further education and training policy since devolution. However, even with the refinement afforded through analytical and theoretical approaches, a full policy evaluation would be too greater task within the confines of this research study. In this respect, the intentions of this chapter have been achieved as it has explored the boundaries and practicalities of potential research avenues and refined them into a manageable study.

Consequently, it was decided that the best approach to evaluating Scottish Government policies for further education and training was to conduct a desk-top summary of relevant documents produced over the past ten years in order to define the overall policy context. One of these policies, which is closely associated with the introduction of inspection arrangements in one specific sector of further education and vocational training, will be selected for evaluation as suggested in Figure 5. Drawing on this evaluation will contribute to the landscape for exploration during the practical aspects of the study.

### 3.7.2 The impact of inspection

The primary strand of this research is to examine the impact of inspection on education practice and learner attainment and this will be informed to some extent by the policy context explored. This undertaking lends itself to the examination of the intentions of inspection policy and a comparison of these intentions with observed outcomes as described in the logic models developed earlier. Before moving on it will be helpful to outline the activities that are planned, review what the likely issues are and determine what still needs to be clarified.

A pragmatic approach would appear to be an examination of the impact of inspection on a single institution within a defined sector of further education and vocational training. Although a sample of relevant institutions and the inclusion of a counterfactual case would be ideal, for this research it would be reasonable to focus on a single institution for the field work. The decision making process employed here has clearly been supported by application of bounded rationality in defining a manageable study.

It is intended to source the secondary data from information made available in the inspection reports of Education Scotland. Analysing this data will provide a basis for more detailed investigations by tracking the response of an institution to the inspection process. Any evidence of impact will then be mapped against the findings of inspectors to consider whether the inspection process has contributed to improvements, or created unintended consequences, testing the strength of our research idea. The overall aim is to record any variations in education practice and learner attainment to establish a primary data set

On the basis of the above, it was decided to use a case study approach on a single institution in a single sector that has been inspected by Education Scotland. The field work is to include documentary analysis of inspection reports, an analysis of institutional data and focus group interviews to evaluate how the institution responded to the findings of inspectors.

From the analytical approaches developed in this chapter, an outline of potential areas for exploration would include;

- Has the inspection process performed what it is designed to do?
- What has been the impact of the inspection process?
- Have any improvements been made to education practice and learner attainment?
- Are there any unintended consequences of the inspection process?

In summary, to explore the above questions the approach that will be adopted is an ex-post stance, applying effectiveness criteria to measure impact. Now that we have established a theoretical approach to our analysis and the basis of the research enquiry, the next chapter moves to the first theme which is to explore the policy context of Scottish further education and vocational training.

## 4. Chapter 4 Policy Landscape and Context

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### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the Scottish further education and vocational training policy landscape. A summary of the policies most relevant to further education and vocational training is presented in table form, which serves as a succinct and useful resource for other researchers. There follows a detailed examination of one key policy which is particularly relevant to this study and that fits well with the themes explored in the literature review.

The second section presents an overview of how the Scottish Government's agency for scrutiny, Education Scotland, has developed an inspection framework to assess the effectiveness of the policy examined above. A proposal is then developed for basing our research investigations on this inspection framework to assess the impact of the inspection process during the field work stages of this study. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the knowledge acquired from the policy evaluation stage can be applied to a single sector through a case study approach in the practical stages of this research.

### 4.2 Policy landscape

This section provides a high-level summary of the policies relating to the Scottish Government further education and vocational training sector published over the past ten years. This desk-top review provides an outline of the policy context and the background to these policies to help inform the direction of enquiry for this research.

Almost all of the documents reviewed are readily available on the Scottish Government website or associated agency websites such as Education Scotland, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Scottish Funding Council. The policies

and initiatives collated in this section have been part of the author's working life through their various stages of development, consultation and implementation; which provides me with a '*working knowledge*' of their application and effectiveness. The author has selected documents that are most relevant to both the reader and this study, focusing on the themes of further education and vocational training highlighted during the literature review.

#### 4.2.1 The policy approach of the Scottish Government to scrutiny and quality improvement in the further education and vocational training sector

It could be argued that the current policy landscape for *skills for learning life and work* in Scotland in both the school-based and further education sectors is confusing. The Scottish policy context for employability and vocational training over the past ten years is characterised by a plethora of commissioned reports, working parties, policy documents and initiatives. Summarised in Table 10 are the principal documents relating to economic growth, workforce up-skilling and further education and vocational training. Most of these documents are interrelated and have an association with vocational training and skills development.

For each policy or initiative in Table 10, the author has provided a brief summary of its aims and context along with a web link to the original document in the reference section.

**Table 10 Overview of key policy documents relating to employability and training in Scotland over the past ten years**

Document Title	Publisher	Reference	Synopsis
<i>Achieving Our Potential: A Framework to tackle poverty and income inequality in Scotland</i>	Scottish Government Nov. 2008	The Scottish Government, (2008)	This framework sets out priorities for action and investment to deliver improvement across four main areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reducing income inequalities</li> <li>• introducing longer-term measures to tackle poverty and the drivers of low income</li> <li>• supporting those experiencing poverty or at risk of falling into poverty</li> <li>• making the tax credits and benefits system work better for Scotland.</li> </ul> It is the part of a suite of interlinking policies that begin to address the longer term aim of improving economic growth in Scotland.
<i>Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth</i>	Scottish Government Oct. 2010	The Scottish Government, (2010)	The Scottish Government refreshed the Skills for Scotland Strategy to reinforce their commitment to training and skills, setting out a flexible, responsive, partnership approach to meeting Scotland's skills needs during economic recovery.
<i>Christie Report</i>	Scottish Government June 2011	APS Group Scotland, (2011)	This strategy seeks to address the challenge of providing, coordinating and supporting as many youth opportunities as possible to help more of Scotland's young people into the workplace. The overall aim is to make a positive difference for young people in the short, medium and long term. This strategy is designed as a catalyst for change and has three strategic themes - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopting an all-Government, all-Scotland approach to supporting youth employment;</li> <li>• Enhancing support for young people; and</li> <li>• Engaging with employers.</li> </ul>
<i>Action for Jobs - Supporting Young Scots into Work: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy</i>	Scottish Government June 2012	The Scottish Government, (2012a)	In response to a challenging economic climate, this strategy aims to coordinate and support as many youth opportunities as possible to help more of Scotland's young people into the workplace. The overall objective is to give young people the chance to channel their talent, enthusiasm and energy into sustainable and rewarding employment.
<i>Working for Growth: A Refresh of the Employability Framework for Scotland</i>	Scottish Government Sept. 2012	The Scottish Government, (2012b)	Sets out the Scottish Government response to the Christie Report on the future delivery of public services. In a context of economic recovery, the document reflects how approaches to employability have developed since 2006 and provides a framework to strengthen the combined focus on jobs and growth.

<i>Opportunities for All: Supporting all young people to participate in post-16 learning, training or work</i>	Scottish Government Nov. 2012	The Scottish Government, (2012c)	This policy extends an explicit commitment to an offer of a place in learning or training to every 16-19 year old who is not currently in employment, education or training. A separate implementation paper backs up this overarching commitment.
<i>The Smith Commission: Report of the Smith Commission for further devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament</i>	The Smith Commission Nov. 2014	The Smith Commission, (2014)	In the wake of the 'No' vote in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum the UK government recommended further devolution of Employment Programmes to Scotland. The Scotland Bill 2016 devolved responsibility for work programmes from 1 April 2017 and in order to ensure continuity of service, a one-year transitional arrangement was implemented to ensure a more enduring approach to Employability in Scotland from 1 April 2018. Employability teams focus on developing and growing the delivery infrastructure and building capacity in employability across Scotland to support the initiative.
<i>Education Working For All! Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce Final Report</i>	Scottish Government June 2014	The Scottish Government, (2014a)	A key document for all education sectors in Scotland with significant relevance for further education and vocational training. The commission recognised that Scotland needs to secure a highly educated, skilled and well-motivated young workforce. Priorities are to ensure Scottish business and industry grows in stature at home and internationally. The policy acknowledges that this will require an increasing reliance on a skilled workforce equipped to respond flexibly to the technical and global challenges in the years ahead. The primary aim is to increase skill and education levels within Scotland to improve productivity and the country's skills base. There is a focus on young people as the demographic change to an older population makes economic success reliant on the working age population. Overall, the policy aims to provide young people in Scotland with the opportunities to develop and use the skills and abilities necessary to become an active participant in the labour force and maximise their contribution to economic growth.
<i>Developing the Young Workforce - Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy</i>	Scottish Government Dec. 2014	The Scottish Government, (2014b)	Developing the Young Workforce - Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy sets out how the Scottish Government will implement the recommendations from the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce in <i>Education Working For All!</i> .
<i>Developing the Young Workforce Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy 2nd Annual Report 2015/2016</i>	Scottish Government Dec. 2016	The Scottish Government, (2016a)	This is an annual report on the progress of <i>Developing the Young Workforce</i> programme. This second annual report largely covers academic year 2015/16 and highlights early progress made in the first part of academic year 2016/17.

We can see from Table 10 that there has been a wide range of policies and initiatives introduced into the Scottish further education and vocational training sector in recent years. Although each of these has similar themes and attempts to address interrelated policy issues, it is very challenging to pick out from the many approaches and strands any over-arching, focussed strategy with clear objectives. There are many recommendations in the various documents, however there is little detail provided on how improvement actions will be evaluated, or any Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Time-bound (SMART) targets to measure progress. Generally, most of these documents reflect wider policy and social issues with an underlying theme of increasing levels of employment and economic output. This is probably not surprising, given the historical influences that we explored in the literature review, whereby social and government priorities take a lead role in shaping further education and vocational training programmes.

Within the scope of this enquiry, we will concentrate on the evaluation of one policy from those collated above that does have a more defined strategy, explicit aims, targets and a monitoring process. This policy is *Developing the Young Workforce - Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy* and this is now examined within the context of the analytical approaches discussed in the previous chapter.

#### 4.3 Policy context - Developing Scotland's Young Workforce

The broad policy landscape outlined above requires further refinement and the aim is to elaborate on one aspect of the policy within the overall context. The rationale for invoking a closer examination of the *Developing the Young Workforce* policy is to help refine the evaluation criteria further by probing into the specifics of what the Scottish Government actually intend to achieve with this policy.



The Scottish Government's focus on improving the number of people in work is embedded in Scotland's ambition for economic success, which in turn is contingent on the supply of an enthusiastic and trained workforce. In January 2013, the Scottish Government established the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce to consider ways to help young people gain improved access to employment and training opportunities. To preserve momentum in developing a trade and vocational skills base for the Scottish economy, the commission considered how a high-quality vocational education and training system could be developed to enhance sustainable economic growth, underpinned by a skilled workforce.

The Commission's report *Education Working for All!* (The Scottish Government, 2014a) was published in June 2014 and made 39 recommendations to address the challenges of producing better-qualified, work-ready and motivated young people, with skills relevant to modern employment opportunities. To support the implementation of these recommendations the Scottish Government published *Developing the Young Workforce - Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy* (The Scottish Government, 2014b). This document outlines a strategic vision for the further education and vocational training sector and addresses one of the Scottish Government's key ambitions;

“How a high quality intermediate vocational and education and training system, which complements our world class higher education system, can be developed to enhance sustainable economic growth with a skilled workforce”

The Scottish Government, (2014b:4)

This goal associates the provision of high-quality education and training with economic growth and a skilled workforce, with the principal aim of reducing youth unemployment by 40% by 2021. The strategy has been developed to include targets based on a seven-year programme across all education sectors, challenging schools, colleges and employers to embrace the report's recommendations and implement the measures required to effect lasting

change. Overall, the strategy sets out objectives and targets which are the responsibility of all local authorities, schools, further education providers and stakeholders in Scotland.

The key driver for the further education and vocational training sector within the *Developing the Young Workforce* policy initiative is the seven-year programme (2014-2021) that aims to better prepare children and young people aged 3-18 for the world of work. This central policy aim, compels all further education and vocational training providers to deliver high-quality programmes that are relevant to economic growth and accommodate the needs of both learners and employers. The vehicle that the government intends to use for achieving this aim is the Modern Apprenticeship. Apprenticeships are one of the most effective training programmes available to achieve the targets set out in this policy initiative in relation to developing a skilled work force.

However, when we consider the detail of this policy from a logic model perspective, we see that the targets and measurement of outcomes are based solely on inputs rather than outputs. That is to say, the targets for Modern Apprenticeships are based on the number of young people starting an apprenticeship, rather than those achieving an apprenticeship and then sustaining their skills in relevant employment. Measuring the number of apprentices starting their programme is not an accurate assessment of those attaining an apprenticeship qualification.

To evaluate this initiative in more detail we can turn to the most recent published response to *Education working for All!* which is to be found in *Developing the Young Workforce Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy: 2nd Annual Report* (The Scottish Government, 2016a).

This second annual report covers academic year 2015/16 and includes early progress made in the first part of academic year 2016/17. The report claims that the first target for increasing the number of Modern Apprenticeships was

exceeded. This assessment of progress against the overall policy aim could be considered premature as, previously identified, it remains focussed on the number of young people starting an apprenticeship. There are no measures included for the number of apprentices completing their apprenticeship, starting full-time employment or contributing to a skilled workforce. From a theoretical perspective, the reporting of progress against an overall policy aim lacks a realistic output related element, and there is an absence of accurate feedback to measure impact.

Based on the figures supplied in the appendix of the progress report, we are able to make some judgement on whether there is advancement towards the targets identified for young people starting a Modern Apprenticeship. For the headline target, to reduce the level of youth unemployment (excluding those in full-time education) by 40% by 2021, the report states there is *encouraging movement* in the number of Modern Apprentices at Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) level 3 and above. The interim target is for 20,000 Modern Apprentices to start their programme with an overall target of 30,000 starts at SVQ level 3 by 2021.

The progress made to date can be established from the appendix in the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual report as shown in Table 11.

**Table 11 Modern Apprenticeship starts at SVQ level 3 or above over a three year trend.**

MA starts at SVQ level 3 or above	Year	Progress
15,655	2013/14	Baseline
16,112	2014/15	+3%
16,763	2015/16	+7%

The Scottish Government, (2016a:48)

The increase of Modern Apprenticeship uptake up to 2015/16 is around 3% to 3.5% per year. If the higher of these figures is sustained, then based on a 3.5% increase each year, the 30,000 Modern Apprenticeship starts by 2021, or 28% increase over baseline, is more than likely to be achieved.

Details in the progress report also identify that 25,818 new Modern Apprenticeships were started in 2015/16, exceeding the target of 25,500 and this is on-track to achieve 30,000 starts per year by 2021. However, it remains to be seen how many of these starts convert into fully qualified apprentices in sustainable employment and whether there is any intention to monitor or report on this metric.

For this policy in particular therefore, we can conclude that only partial analysis is possible within a policy evaluation framework, as the data outputs are not sufficiently well defined or measured to evaluate impact fully. When attempting to apply more detailed analytical tools, such as logic models, we can see the reasons for this, as the classification of outputs is not consistent with the overall aim of the policy. Specifically, the number of young people starting an apprenticeship is not a true indication of the actual outputs for increasing and sustaining an experienced and qualified workforce of the future. In this case, the outputs being measured are still part of the process and the true outputs are those young people that succeed in completing their apprenticeship and enter relevant employment. In conclusion, only partial evidence is available to demonstrate that the policy achieves the aim of developing a young workforce in Scotland that will contribute to economic growth.

#### 4.4 Control measures for monitoring policy implementation

Although the headline figures in the progress report identified above show a positive picture, we have determined that analytically there are gaps in the methodology for assessing the impact of the *Developing the Young Workforce* policy. Clearly, the Scottish Government believes on the basis of the interim

report that this policy is achieving its aims. However more evidence is required and this is essentially the provision of data for the feedback loop that we observed in policy cycles and logic models.

To address this, we can explore how the government intends to achieve more granularity in assessing the impact of this major policy initiative ‘*on the ground*’. What is required is a measurement of the effectiveness of training providers in converting a Modern Apprenticeship start into a qualified, employed apprentice. This measurement has the potential to provide data for a full policy evaluation, as the true impact of the policy may then be assessed by analysing the number of qualified apprentices that contribute to the workforce, compared with the number of young people starting an apprenticeship.

Returning to the report *Education Working for All!*, we see that the commission recognised this issue and identified a disparity between the scrutiny of further education and vocational training in general and that of Modern Apprenticeships.

“Recommendation 9:

An industry-led quality improvement regime should be introduced to oversee the development and promotion of Modern Apprenticeships.”

and within that recommendation:

“Education Scotland’s remit should be extended to include inspection and quality improvement for the delivery of Modern Apprenticeships.”

The Scottish Government, (2014a:31)

Here, the commission is acknowledging that those training providers delivering Modern Apprenticeship programmes did not experience the same formal external scrutiny as other forms of further education and vocational training, and this was at odds with the rest of the Scottish education system. Policy makers therefore, acted to address this imbalance by planning an inspection process that provides for the public reporting of the quality of Modern Apprenticeship programmes and the levels of learner (apprentice) attainment. This policy adjustment by the

Scottish Government was used to support their strategic objectives and it provides some data for the overlooked feedback loop highlighted earlier. Data made available from this scrutiny activity provides a measure of the quality of education and vocational training delivered (education practice) along with a readout of levels of apprentice attainment. Whilst providing the evidence apprenticeships successfully completed, there is still work to be done in evaluating the longer-term impact of qualified apprentices in contributing to a sustainable workforce. However, the scrutiny activities outlined above will provide a valuable source of data that fits very well with our research themes.

In order to address the requirements of Recommendation 9 and obtain the necessary data for the public reporting of Modern Apprenticeships, the Scottish Government elected to implement new inspection arrangements that have now been developed by Education Scotland.

Before moving on to discuss the development of these arrangements in detail, there now follows a reflection on the expectations of inspection policy, which is fundamental to this research. The next section therefore, sets out the policy context for Education Scotland to develop a better understanding of the underlying purpose of scrutiny in Scotland's education system.

#### 4.5 Policy aims within a National Quality Framework

The principal theory that is being explored in this research is whether the process of inspection is effective and has an impact. From the investigations carried out in this study so far, there does not appear to be an evidence base to evaluate this theory. We will see in this section that Education Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government has recently announced a considerable increase in school-based inspection activity. The inference here is that this policy shift indicates a belief that inspection must have some form of positive impact, at least within the school-based sector. Alternatively or additionally, the Scottish Government may consider that they require more assurance from

Education Scotland regarding the quality of education practice and learner attainment in Scottish schools. However, at this point we have not been able to establish a link between the process of inspection and a positive impact on education provision.

#### 4.5.1 The role of Education Scotland within this policy setting

The role of Education Scotland is to provide the Scottish Government with independent evaluations of learner attainment and the quality of learning experiences for Scottish learners of all ages. The agency also has a second role as a driver of self-improvement in Scottish education across all sectors.

Overall, Education Scotland's vision is that;

“Scottish learners will progress in one of the most effective education systems in the world, renowned for the ability of national and local partners to work flexibly together to achieve high-quality and equitable outcomes for all.”

Education Scotland, (2012:1)

The mission, which the agency is pursuing in order to realise this vision, is summarised as;

“to provide the best blend of national support and challenge to inspire and secure continuous improvement in the opportunities that all Scottish learners can access”.

Education Scotland, (2012:1)

In addition, underpinning the vision and mission there are seven strategic objectives, two of which are related directly to this research and these are to;

- Build the capacity of education providers to improve their performance continuously.
- Provide independent evaluation of education provision.

Education Scotland, (2012:1)

These two strategic objectives align well with the findings in the literature review and provide a focus for investigations during the field work stages of this study.

#### 4.5.2 Policy in practice

All scrutiny arrangements developed by Education Scotland are now shaped under the umbrella principles of Education Scotland's *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan*. (The Scottish Government, 2016b).

This framework centres on the two primary objectives of reporting on the standard of education delivered and improving the education practice and learner attainment delivered by an education provider. Interestingly, more contemporary documents such as the *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan*, do not focus explicitly on the terms scrutiny and inspection.

There are references to inspection in relation to data gathering, and this fits well with our discussions here, whereby inspection is used as a tool to establish data that can inform analysis. Recently however, there appears to be movement towards a gentler language in some policy documents, concentrating on the offer of support for improvement to education providers, rather than on the more robust language around scrutiny.

The significant role of scrutiny re-appeared a few months following the publication of the *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan*, when Education Scotland (BBC, 2017) confirmed a significant increase in school inspections.



This comparatively unexpected announcement dramatically increased the annual number of school inspections by almost 40% and Karen Reid, interim chief executive of Education Scotland, said;

"Increasing school inspections signals the first step in a radical new way Education Scotland will work to support and drive improvement in schools."

BBC, (2017)

This statement clearly links the inspection of schools to supporting and driving improvement. Karen Reid also goes on to say;

"Robust inspections are a powerful tool to support improvement and ensure every young person gets the best possible education." They provide assurance about what is working well, but also evidence what improvement is needed where."

BBC, (2017)

The language embedded in the *National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan* and the surprise announcement of increased inspection activity continue to stimulate debate around the dual roles of inspection agencies such as Education Scotland. A similar discussion is currently underway in the English inspection arena, fuelled by the '*value for money*' aspects that we commented in earlier chapters, as the Public Accounts Committee comments;

"the system for school accountability and improvement was muddled in a way that led to confusion for both parents and education professionals."

Dunton, (2018)

In relation to the school-based sector in Scotland, we have a clear indication from Scottish Government that the aim of implementing a substantial increase in the number of school inspections is to improve educational outcomes for learners. At the same time, there is an expectation that the inspection process will identify and drive forward improvements to the quality of education that

young people experience. The rationale behind this approach directly links the process of inspection with improvements to education practice and learner attainment.

However, we know from our review of literature that the empirical evidence to support this rationale is relatively scarce and potentially quite subjective. This anomaly provides an avenue for exploration and supports the value of investigating the overall hypothesis.

#### 4.6 Selecting a sector within further education and vocational training

The *Developing the Young Workforce* policy promoted the role of Modern Apprenticeships as a mechanism for achieving the Scottish Government's ambition for a better qualified workforce. This section outlines how Modern Apprenticeships are scrutinised by Education Scotland. Given that these inspection arrangements have not yet been evaluated, there is an opportunity to determine the impact of these arrangements within the field work stages of this research.

As we have seen, apprenticeships have a key role in the Scottish Government's strategy to develop the skills of Scotland's workforce. Modern Apprenticeships are designed to support the government's goal by providing opportunities to secure industry-recognised qualifications while earning a wage. These apprenticeships are available across a wide range of employment sectors, with Modern Apprenticeship programmes delivered across Scotland by further education and vocational training providers. Apprenticeships are based on frameworks that are licensed by Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and other Sector Skills Organisations (SSOs) with recognition by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES). As such, Modern Apprentices receive vocational education and training that harmonises with the needs of local and national employers.

Within the strategic vision for further education and vocational training outlined by the Scottish government in *Developing the Young Workforce*, there is a clear intention to monitor the quality of the apprenticeships delivered by training providers.

“the outcomes that learners achieve are to be evaluated through an appropriate blend of self-evaluation, external scrutiny and public reporting through a national quality assurance and quality improvement system.”

Education Scotland, (n.d.b:Introduction)

In order to achieve this monitoring, Education Scotland developed bespoke inspection arrangements (Education Scotland, 2017) and commenced the inspection of the first Modern Apprenticeship employment sector in June 2014.

For each Modern Apprenticeship employment sector inspected, a sample of training centres is selected across Scotland based on a range of factors including geography, number of apprentices and levels of attainment. A team of Her Majesty’s Inspectors (HMI) from Education Scotland and Associate Assessors (AA), from SDS, colleges and independent training providers carry out these inspections<sup>5</sup>. Inspection activities incorporate the scrutiny of levels of apprentice attainment, observation of education practice and the training delivered, discussions with centre managers and staff, and a dialogue with employers and apprentices.

More detail of the methodology and inspection framework that Education Scotland operates to scrutinise Modern Apprenticeships is presented in the next chapter.

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<sup>5</sup> Referred to in the arrangements document as external reviews

## 4.7 Case study proposal

We observed in the previous section that an increase in inspection activity might be considered to bring about improvements to education practice and learner attainment. The aim of the field work is to test this theory in more detail.

### 4.7.1 Focussing this research on the inspection methodology for Modern Apprenticeships

Given the large number and very wide variety of Modern Apprenticeship employment sectors across Scotland, it would not be realistic to inspect all of these sectors concurrently within the resources available. Therefore, Education Scotland using a sampling approach has developed a rolling programme of inspections. Following the inspection of each training centre a formal report is presented to the senior management summarising the findings of inspectors and these individual centre reports are not made publicly available. The reports produced from the sample of training centres are collated to produce national reports for each Modern Apprenticeship employment sector, and Education Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government publishes these.

The national and individual centre reports follow the same format, with grades awarded for six high-level quality indicators and these are the foundation of the Education Scotland Modern Apprenticeship inspection arrangements. The full details of the inspection framework and arrangements for Modern Apprenticeships can be found in the document *External quality arrangements for the evaluation of Modern Apprenticeship Off-the-job training* (Education Scotland, 2017).

Since the start of these inspections in 2014, Education Scotland have published five national employment sector reports based on over 40 individual training centres reports (Education Scotland, n.d.c). It is these individual centre reports that provide an opportunity for examination and a rich source of secondary data.

#### 4.7.2 Field work proposal using a case study approach

From among the individual reports produced to-date, one centre stands out in particular and the field work proposal is to use this centre for a case study. Education Scotland selected the case study centre in a sample of ten training centres and the inspection established that this centre was not performing well. Consequently, Education Scotland in agreement with Skills Development Scotland, which is the agency funding Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland, concluded that a second full inspection of the centre should take place. These circumstances were unprecedented in the history of the 40 inspection visits and provided a unique opportunity to explore the ways in which the case study centre responded to the inspection process. The field work intends to establish any observable relationship between the inspection process, education practice and levels of apprentice attainment between the first and second inspection.

The next chapter moves on to consider the methodological approach selected for this research and considers some of the methodological challenges encountered, along with mitigating strategies.

## 5. Chapter 5 Methodological approach, methodological challenges and mitigating strategies

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### 5.1 Introduction

The theoretical and analytical framework analysis carried out in chapter three led to the decision to focus on a single case study institution and apply an ex-post stance approach to evaluate the impact of inspection on education practice and apprentice attainment. The data sources available for the case study training centre were secondary data, originating from a quantitative analysis of two inspection reports, and primary data gathered during the field work. The availability of both quantitative and qualitative data elements favoured the option of a mixed-method, or two-stage, methodological approach. This chapter considers the strengths and limitations of the methodological approach chosen within the context of a mixed-method research design. Reflections on my positionality as an academic researcher, and the trustworthiness of the research approach more generally, are included in this chapter along with mitigating strategies to overcome any potential bias from a personal or methodological perspective. The chapter concludes with an outline of the practical steps taken during the field work element to overcome, as far as possible, the methodological challenges identified.

### 5.2 Methodological approach

This section provides a theoretical overview of the methodological approach selected, together with the main advantages and disadvantages of the mixed-method research that is used in this study. The underlying intentions for the selection of this methodology is also discussed and its relationship with the evidence gathering for data analysis from secondary and primary sources.

### 5.2.1 Mixed-method research

Individually, quantitative and qualitative research approaches have their own strengths and weaknesses, often creating tension between academics over the methods by which the truth might be obtained. As Carr, 1994 concludes, although each approach has its own place depending on the mode of enquiry, combining the strengths of these two methods in triangulation is likely to yield richer and deeper research findings.

“Although quantitative and qualitative methods are different, one approach is not superior to the other, both have recognized strengths and weaknesses and are used ideally in combination.”

Carr, (1994:720)

The purpose of selecting a mixed-method design for this research is to draw on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, whilst offsetting the weaknesses inherent to using each approach by itself, thereby achieving a broader perspective during the research investigation. (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Bryman et al, 2008; Brannen 2005; Bryman, 2006).

On balance, it is anticipated that a mixed-method approach will help to overcome the limitations of a single design by addressing the theoretical perspective at different levels, through a deeper explanation and interpretation of the research results.

Methodologist John W Creswell has written several texts on the subject of research design and has developed a core set of characteristics, and a checklist, to help with the design of mixed-method research approaches (Creswell, 2014:216). This framework was helpful in assessing and evolving my own methodological approach for this research. It also supported a focus on the purpose of the study, on how the credibility of the research could be enhanced and a recognition of the need for reliability.

Based on considerations derived from the literature above, the methodological approach chosen was established as a mixed-method design, contributing a two-tier structure to the data analysis. The intention being to provide a more thorough understanding of the research findings which may not have been generated by any one method alone.

It is worthwhile reflecting on how trustworthy each of the two individual elements of quantitative and qualitative research are within the overall mixed-method approach, and their contrasting strengths and weaknesses. For the quantitative aspect of this study, it is possible to use numerical data and analyse this with reasonable confidence to determine a measure of validity and reliability, or at least identify and acknowledge the limitations within these concepts. However for the qualitative element of the study, which is a relatively large portion of the mixed-methodology employed in this research, these concepts are less distinct and need to be thought of in different terms.

This follows as qualitative research is not able to rely on techniques and processes that have established metrics in relation to validity and reliability. Therefore, these concepts need to be addressed differently to safeguard that the research findings are trustworthy in terms of credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability. The relevance of these criteria in relation to this research are discussed in more detail in the next section.

### 5.2.2 The choice of methodology for this study

We have discussed above how mixed-method approaches are likely to provide a greater understanding of the research results compared with a single design and this was certainly a consideration in the choice of methodology for this research. As the study is based on one institution, the mixed-method approach was deemed most appropriate to maximise opportunities for generalising the findings and position the research in a wider context.



Acknowledging that the individual methods have their own strengths and weaknesses, there were two other factors affecting the final choice of methodology. Firstly, there is the consideration of practicality created by choices made through natural definition. In this case, the two inspection reports were readily available and provided an opportunity for quantitative secondary data analysis leading to the construction of a reasonably accurate profile of the case study centre. A range of positive and limiting factors were then applied to develop the field work that would 'fill in the gaps' left by the secondary sources. The positive factors included approval for access to a co-operative case study centre, a broad range of participants and readily available internal data sources. This was balanced by the limitations of time to design and implement a mixed-method approach, finite patience with researchers and constraints on resources that excluded a longitudinal study.

A second factor of the commitment to a mixed-method approach is the influence of my occupational experiences and overall phenomenology. In particular, as both an engineer and inspector I would routinely prefer to work with structured processes that are developed from quantifiable sources supported by methods of triangulation. Individual inclinations such as this are expressed by (Bryman, 2007).

“Thus, the researcher’s methodological predilections, such as a commitment to a quantitative or qualitative research approach, lead to research questions being framed in a way that makes them accessible to a particular research method or possibly a cluster of research methods.”

Bryman, (2007:17)

Recognising there may be potential for bias towards a single method design, I decided to include a counterbalance by including a substantial element of qualitative analysis to strengthen the evaluative elements of the research. This was intended to provide more depth to the academic debate and additional data for future discussions and studies through a more objective and philosophical research methodology.

Overall, the choice of methodology is based on theoretical concepts and shaped by an intuitive yet pragmatic approach, with conscious triangulation using the deeper qualitative methods to examine the findings from secondary quantitative sources in more detail. However, this approach involved more time and was inevitably more complex than a single method. In particular, extra time and resources were required to plan and implement the practical elements of the field work when drawing on the findings of the secondary data, resolving any discrepancies arising during the interpretation of the findings and designing the field work questions.

### 5.3 Role conflict, methodological challenges and mitigating strategies

This section considers the potential effects of role conflict, given my dual identity as an inspector and academic researcher, methodological factors arising from the choice of a mixed-method design and the mitigating strategies introduced to minimise these effects.

#### 5.3.1 Role conflict

The potential for role conflict was identified very early in the design stages of this study. My dual role as an academic researcher and practising inspector evaluating the impact of inspections conducted by Education Scotland, my employer, raises credible concerns around the potential for bias in the analysis and reporting of research findings. This could lead to issues around how I interpreted data and whether this skewed any conclusions towards a more positive, or indeed more negative, view of the impact of inspections within the chosen education sector.

These thoughts led me to reflect on my positionality when carrying out the practical elements of the field work and my interaction with participants. In particular, the effects of my dual role when participants were answering questions about the inspection process and inspection outcomes in their

organisation. In this regard, the question posed to myself was whether participants might behave differently when questioned under these circumstances than they would have with a totally independent academic researcher. This influence is shaped by an established understanding in research practice known as the Hawthorne effect and there are many texts relating to the possibility of this effect. However, for the purposes of this research it is not necessary to review these effects in detail as the concept itself can take many forms, dependent on its application and context (Sedgwick and Greenwood, 2015).

“Without doubt the behaviour of research participants is influenced by observation and measurement. However, it has been suggested that there is no single Hawthorne effect and that the terminology encompasses a variety of potential biases.”

Sedgwick and Greenwood, (2015:2)

It was important therefore to recognise how the interplay of my dual roles and the responses of participants might affect and potentially influence the substance of the evidence gathered. The relationship between myself and the case study institution was therefore of vital importance and it was necessary to ensure there was clear blue water between by activities and intentions as an academic researcher and those in my role as a full-time professional inspector. In the context of social exchange theory, this transactional relationship might be referred to as reciprocity. Frans Leeuw, 2002 has undertaken a useful review of reciprocity in relation to educational inspectorates in Europe and discusses the relationships between evaluator (or inspector) and evaluator (inspectee).

For this research the recognition of reciprocity and trust between myself and the participants became an increasingly important factor to consider, as Leeuw, 2002 identifies;

“Trust is particularly important because, as Power (1999, p. 134) notes, ‘the audit ... reflects a tendency not to trust’.”

Frans Leeuw, (2002:141)

and;

“Reciprocity, therefore, is also of relevance for higher education evaluators. Where trust between teacher, researcher, student and management is crucial, quality evaluators that do not invest enough in reciprocity run the risk of becoming ‘trust killers’.”

Frans Leeuw, (2002:145)

Clearly, the issue of reciprocity is highly important in this study and on recognising this, along with the possibility for data irregularities from Hawthorne effects, it was necessary to include mitigating strategies to minimise these effects.

### 5.3.2 Mitigating strategies for methodological challenges

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are certain concepts that need to be considered to maximise the trustworthiness of the research findings and these criteria are credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability.

These criteria, often referred to as Guba's constructs, are well documented in the field of research and Shenton, 2004 echoes this in his paper on strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects.

“Although many critics are reluctant to accept the trustworthiness of qualitative research, frameworks for ensuring rigour in this form of work have been in existence for many years. Guba's constructs, in particular, have won considerable favour and form the focus of this paper.”

Shenton, (2004:63)

There follows a brief summary of how I addressed each of these four criteria in relation to this study.

Credibility concerns the accuracy of research findings and to help demonstrate a true representation of the findings in this study I have used triangulation to support the criterion of credibility. Transferability is more challenging to address in this particular case, as it is a demonstration of how the qualitative research is applicable to other contexts. For this single case study it is acknowledged that there is limited transferability and no counterfactual study available. However, I have identified an interesting case and the idea that the findings from this prevailing environment cannot be generalised or transferable to another setting is not necessarily a weakness.

In order to achieve the criterion of confirmability, I considered the actions required to demonstrate the scale of neutrality in my gathering and evaluation of the research findings. In this respect, I identified that there is a potential for participants' responses to have some element of bias, or personal motivation, given my dual role as inspector and academic researcher. I also took steps to minimise any bias from my own predispositions that might skew the interpretation of participants' responses to fit a certain narrative. The record of findings from individual participants were recorded accurately with methods used by HM Inspectors to provide an audit trail. Many of these responses are

presented verbatim in the findings and analysis section of this thesis to help identify that the evaluations accurately represent participants' responses.

Finally, dependability is the extent to which this research could be repeated by other researchers and that the findings would be consistent. This is a challenging criterion generally in qualitative work and more so in this particular case. Although it would be challenging to repeat this exact study, there are opportunities identified in the closing chapters that would help to confirm that the findings are consistent and could be repeated.

The mitigating strategies implemented prior to beginning the field work included personal visits to each of the agencies involved with funding and monitoring the case study institution. For each agency, I presented a clear indication of my intentions regarding what the research aimed to achieve and the guaranteed confidentiality associated with any findings. This was essential at the outset to minimise any concerns regarding lack of information and openness which might result in being a "trust killer". Furthermore, I visited the chief executive of the case study institution prior to the field work being agreed to explain fully my intentions, allay any concerns and give reassurance regarding the use of the data, the research findings and anonymity. As a well-known practitioner in Scottish further education and training for several decades, my trustworthiness was taken in good faith.

In relation to role conflict, the mixed-method design helped to improve aspects of impartiality through comparison of both the quantitative and qualitative evidence. This aspect reduced the risk that my interpretations were either more, or less, positive towards the inspection arrangements conducted by Education Scotland. Also, to overcome any feelings by participants that the research could be similar to the formalised monitoring and evaluation of an inspection, I ensured that advance information, a Plain Language Statement (Appendix 2) and confidentiality form were clear, open and honest documents. At the start of every focus group discussion and interview I re-iterated clearly

my position as an academic researcher, ensured everyone understood my role and allowed time for any questions and clarification.

#### 5.4 Practical arrangements for mitigating methodological challenges

In my role as academic researcher when undertaking the field work, all research activity was conducted within the ethical guidelines of the University of Glasgow. However, I recognised that my other role as an inspector with Education Scotland may lead to some apprehension for the case study institution during the gathering of my evidence and the reporting of research findings. Therefore, it was important to make clear at all stages of institutional, agency and individual consent, that the research findings would not impact in any way on the assessment or standing of the case study institution by Education Scotland. My dual identity as an academic researcher, and as a professional inspector, was made very clear through all requests for consent and at the beginning of all interviews and discussions. Furthermore, the field work was carried out after a full inspection cycle of this education sector and the case study institution was aware that a further formal inspection was highly unlikely in the near future.

The research was conducted using professional dialogue throughout a combination of interviews and focus groups based in the case study centre, with no intervention strategies for participants. The interview subjects and focus group participants were all professionals and young adults. Prior to the field work taking place, it was made clear to all participants that their involvement in the interviews and discussion groups was voluntary and this was explained distinctly in the Plain Language Statement provided to all participants before any discussions commenced. All participants were also provided with a consent form before entering into any dialogue and were asked to record their consent by signature.

Care was taken not to identify any individual by their job function and to protect the identity of individuals within all published work, generic titles were used such as “a Board member”, “a senior leader”, “a middle manager” or “an apprentice”.

All field work research was conducted within the established HMI principles for gathering, collecting, analysing and storing evidence, which aims to protect inspectors (and in this case the researcher) from any negative effects that might arise during the professional dialogue. Data was analysed by triangulating the responses of individuals and groups together with key performance indicator data available from the case study institution and Skills Development Scotland. The field work was undertaken within a public building which had all relevant legislative arrangements and insurances in place for health and safety.

Overall, every effort was made to reduce the limiting effects and challenges of the methodological approach chosen in order to maximise the trustworthiness of the research undertaken in this study.

The next chapter goes on to describe the field work carried out in the case study institution during the practical stages of this research.



## 6. Chapter 6 Field Work, Research Findings and Analysis

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### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of this study, which are described under the sub-sections of findings from secondary sources and findings from primary sources. In the secondary sources section, there is an examination of the findings reported by Her Majesty's Inspectors during their two inspection visits to the case study centre. These documents provide a valuable data source that has been used to contribute to the context and detail of the research questions. Building on this initial analysis and reflections, the primary sources section presents an evaluation of the primary data collected during the field work at the case study centre. The analysis of this data provides greater depth to the understanding of the impact of inspection on the training centre from an organisational perspective. The chapter goes on to assess how well the two data sets and overall findings contribute towards our understanding of the research themes.

#### 6.1.1 Overview of the case study institution and preparatory work

This section provides detail to the background and context of the case study institution to help position the research themes in the context of planning the field work.

The case study institution is a large post-16 education provider in Scotland that receives funding from the Scottish Funding Council to provide a curriculum portfolio in response to regional and local needs. This institution is governed by a Board of Governors to serve the needs of communities and employers across a mix of rural and urban populations. The varied socio-economic profile of the region served by this institution reflects Scotland as a whole and the most recent

Regional Skills Assessment report from SDS shows that the percentage of workless households, and the age and gender profile of the region, are comparable with most communities across Scotland.

Through its Regional Outcome Agreement with the SFC this institution has responded to the Developing the Young Workforce recommendations and government priorities for increasing employment, supported by formal academic and industry partnerships. The delivery of Modern Apprenticeships is a key driver for the case study institution in contributing to these priorities, and to the targets set out in Education Working for All!

The case study centre was selected in spring 2016 for a sector specific inspection by Education Scotland within a standard sample of centres offering Modern Apprenticeships. At that time, there were a total of 83 Modern Apprentices undertaking the SVQ Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications within the Modern Apprenticeship programme. In line with the quality arrangements for these inspections (Education Scotland, 2017) the institution received verbal feedback following the inspection and a written, but not publicly available, report on its achievement rates for apprentices, the quality of its education practice and its leadership.

Consent for this research was kindly granted by the case study centre along with Education Scotland who is responsible for reporting on the quality of post-16 provision in Scotland's colleges, Skills Development Scotland who funds Modern Apprenticeship programmes in Scotland's Colleges and the Scottish Funding Council, who has overall responsibility for funding post-16 institutions in Scotland.

As with all publicly funded education institutions in Scotland, the case study institution has a variety of openly available reports including; audited financial accounts, board of management minutes, inspection and audit reports and a number of other documents that summarise and evaluate institutional

performance. These documents were examined initially to help inform the detail of the research questions.

The two principal documents available for analysis are the Education Scotland reports produced after the first and second inspections. In order to maintain confidentiality, the reports and documents relating to the case study institution will not be disclosed. The range of grades available for inspectors to award to centres at these inspection visits is shown in Table 12.

**Table 12 The grade profile used by inspectors when reporting on Modern Apprenticeship programmes in Scotland**

<b>EXCELLENT</b>	Outstanding and sector leading
<b>VERY GOOD</b>	Major Strengths
<b>GOOD</b>	Important strengths with some areas for improvement
<b>SATISFACTORY</b>	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
<b>WEAK</b>	Important weaknesses
<b>UNSATISFACTORY</b>	Major weaknesses

The impelling reason for selecting this institution for the field work is its very poor performance in comparison with all other institutions inspected in the same sample. Table 13 summarises the grades awarded by inspectors in the sample of training centres inspected for this Modern Apprenticeship employment sector. We can see from the grade profile that there is a wide variation in the performance of the training centres within the sample. The case study centre received a set of grades that were significantly lower than those awarded for other training centres in the same Modern Apprenticeship employment sector.

**Table 13**      **Comparison of grades for the case study centre with other centres in the same sample of Modern Apprenticeship inspections**

	Outcomes and Impact		Delivery of Training		Leadership and Quality Culture	
Centre 1	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Excellent	Excellent
Centre 2	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Centre 3	Good	Very Good	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Very Good
Centre 4	Good	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Very Good	Good
Centre 5	Very Good	Good	Very Good	Good	Good	Good
Centre 6	Satisfactory	Good	Good	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Centre 7	Good	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
<b>Case Study Centre</b>	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b>
Overall for this employment sector	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good

At the time of the first inspection, the institution received verbal feedback from inspectors followed by a confidential report based on all aspects of the Modern Apprenticeship programme that included the levels of apprentice attainment, the quality of education practice and the centre's leadership and quality culture.

Based on the poor performance of this training centre, it was agreed that the institution should immediately develop a recovery action plan to address the areas for development raised by inspectors. At the end of the recovery plan period, a second full inspection was scheduled to determine the progress made by the institution in improving education practice, levels of apprentice attainment and leadership and quality culture. The requirement of an improvement plan and the notice of a second inspection was unprecedented for any Modern Apprenticeship provider.

The relatively short period between the two inspections, of around 18 months, and the consistency of inspection methodology presented a unique opportunity to investigate the impact of the inspection process. The weak grade profile is very uncommon for an institution of this type in Scotland and this provided the prospect of measuring any distance travelled by the institution from one inspection to another. It was decided therefore to conduct field work to determine the impact of the inspection process on improving educational practice and apprentice attainment.

## 6.2 Context of the case study training centre

There follows a brief overview of how the case study centre reacted to the findings of the first inspection to set out the context for the practical investigation carried out.

After the presentation of inspection findings to the chief executive and senior management team by inspectors, a number of observations can be made that are relevant to this enquiry and these are now described.

Understandably, the chief executive and senior leadership team of the training centre were very disappointed by the findings of inspectors and the grades awarded. The Modern Apprenticeship programme for which they were accountable and delivered using public funds was found to be of a very poor standard. Notably, the chief executive and leadership team did not attempt to defend, dispute or even debate the accuracy of the grades awarded. In the author's experience, this is very unusual, as there is a longstanding pre-disposition of chief executives and senior managers to challenge any low grades awarded by inspectors. This lack of challenge may well be a reflection on the culture of the organisation at the time of the first inspection. Another potential reason for the lack of challenge may be that this report and grades awarded were confidential to the training centre. Had this been a publicly available report, as discussed in earlier chapters, the outcome would have been much higher stakes and the training centre might well have challenged the findings of inspectors.<sup>6</sup>

Following the outcome of the first inspection, there were several options open to the training centre and, at a corporate level; these included a formal appeal against the findings of the inspection team. However, no appeal was made against the findings of inspectors. Internal to the organisation a major decision would have been whether to continue with this Modern Apprenticeship programme, or favour other programmes that were performing better. At this point, the senior leadership team would be unsighted as to whether the issues identified in this particular Modern Apprenticeship programme was an isolated case, or whether similar issues were occurring within other Modern Apprenticeship programmes within the training centre. It is to the credit of the leadership team that they decided to continue with this programme and tackle the concerns raised by inspectors through a comprehensive action plan, which as we will see, was used as a vehicle for driving improvement.

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<sup>6</sup> Shortly after the decision to conduct a second inspection, the chief executive left the training centre and by the time of the second inspection, there was a new chief executive and senior leadership team in place. However, the original curriculum managers and training staff for the Modern Apprenticeship programme remained consistent.

### 6.3 Findings from secondary sources - a summary relating to the quantitative element of the research

#### 6.3.1 The inspection reports

The focus this element of the research is the two confidential inspection reports that were shared with the training centre and relevant government agencies. The author has access to these reports and the permission of all parties involved to use these inspection reports as a basis for this research.

The inspection framework *External quality arrangements for the evaluation of Modern Apprenticeship Off-the-job training* contains 12 core **quality indicators** that provide the foundation of each inspection and inform the grades awarded by inspectors. The *quality indicators* are grouped under six high-level questions, as illustrated in Table 14.

**Table 14      Quality Indicators within the external quality arrangements for the evaluation of Modern Apprenticeship Off-the-job training**

<b>Outcomes and Impact</b>	
<b>High Level Question 1</b>	<b>How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant high-quality outcomes?</b>
<i>Quality Indicator 1</i>	How effective is the centre at achieving and maintaining high levels of service delivery?
<i>Quality Indicator 2</i>	How well does the centre adhere to statutory principles and guidance?
<b>High Level Question 2</b>	<b>How well do we meet the needs of our apprentices and stakeholders?</b>
<i>Quality Indicator 3</i>	How well do apprentices make progress and achieve individual outcomes?
<i>Quality Indicator 4</i>	How well does training meet the needs of apprentices and employers?
<b>Delivery of training</b>	
<b>High Level Question 3</b>	<b>How good is our delivery of training?</b>
<i>Quality Indicator 5</i>	How well does training meet the needs of apprentices and employers?
<i>Quality Indicator 6</i>	How well is training delivered?
<i>Quality Indicator 7</i>	How well do staff reflect on provision to improve training?
<i>Quality Indicator 8</i>	How well do employers and apprentices participate in the development and planning of training?
<b>High Level Question 4</b>	<b>How good is our management of training delivery?</b>
<i>Quality Indicator 9</i>	How well does the centre work with partners to improve outcomes for apprentices?
<b>Leadership and quality culture</b>	
<b>High Level Question 5</b>	<b>How good is our strategic leadership?</b>
<i>Quality Indicator 10</i>	How effective is leadership for partnership working and delivery of training?
<i>Quality Indicator 11</i>	How well do leaders secure improvements in the quality and impact of training?
<b>How good is our capacity to improve?</b>	
<b>High Level Question 6</b>	<b>Global judgment based on evidence of all key areas above.</b>
<i>Quality Indicator 12</i>	How good are internal evaluation and self-reflection activities to ensure we have the capacity to improve and enhance the delivery of training?



During the inspection process of the training centre, inspectors identify key **areas of positive practice** and **areas for development**, determined through a process of evidence gathering under each of the twelve *quality indicators*. Through careful consideration of the quantity, importance and strength of the **positive practice** and **areas for development** evident within each centre, the inspection team award an appropriate grade for each high-level question. It is these **areas of positive practice** and **areas for development** that form the basis for analysis of the secondary data.

For the case study centre, the first inspection identified a set of grades that indicated that the centre was performing well below the standards expected, and all grades awarded were **WEAK**. Following the implementation of an improvement plan by the training centre, the second inspection conducted under the same inspection framework with the same inspection team identified that these grades had improved substantially. The differences reported between the grades awarded at each of the two inspection visits are now analysed in the following section.

### 6.3.2 Case study centre - data analysis

As the full detail of the confidential inspection reports were available to the author for analysis, it was possible to drill down beneath the grades awarded by inspectors and explore the detail behind the **positive practice** identified and the **areas for development**.

The two formal inspection reports provided a rich source of secondary data for the quantitative element of this research. Firstly, there are two sets of high-level data (grades) separated in time between the two inspection visits. Secondly, we have the more granular information available from the details in the written reports. This detail provided an opportunity to establish a deeper understanding of the impact of the inspection process and how it might have contributed to any improvements made by the case study centre.

Utilising the data available within the inspection reports, the analysis in this section begins with a comparison of grades awarded for the six high-level questions and then moves on to a more detailed consideration of the findings by inspectors, categorised under the twelve *quality indicators* illustrated in Table 14.

To begin our analysis, let us consider the summary of grades awarded for the six high level questions at each of the two inspection visits, see Table 15.

**Table 15** A comparison of grades at the case study centre for the first and second inspections

<i>High Level Questions</i>	Grades awarded at first Inspection	Grades awarded at second Inspection
<b><i>Outcome and Impact</i></b>		
1. How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant high quality outcomes?	<b>WEAK</b>	<b>VERY GOOD</b>
2. How well do we meet the needs of our apprentices and stakeholders?	<b>WEAK</b>	<b>GOOD</b>
<b><i>Delivery of Training</i></b>		
3. How good is our delivery of training?	<b>WEAK</b>	<b>VERY GOOD</b>
4. How good is our management of training delivery?	<b>WEAK</b>	<b>VERY GOOD</b>
<b><i>Leadership and Quality Culture</i></b>		
5. How good is our strategic leadership?	<b>WEAK</b>	<b>GOOD</b>
<b><i>Capacity for Improvement</i></b>		
6. How good are internal evaluation and self-reflection activities to ensure we have the capacity to improve and enhance the delivery of training?	<b>WEAK</b>	<b>VERY GOOD</b>

The grade awarded for each high-level question is established from an evaluation based on a wide range of evidence gathered during each inspection visit. As all the grades awarded in the second inspection improved significantly compared with the first inspection, we can determine from the corresponding high-level questions that there was improvement identified in the level of attainment of apprentices, their overall experience, the standard of education practice and aspects of management and leadership.

In order to explore the narrative behind this substantial improvement in grades in greater detail, we can conduct a more thorough analysis by reflecting on the written detail in each inspection report. Before moving on however, it is worth taking a moment to explain the format of these reports, as they are central to this quantitative analysis.

Until recently, Education Scotland inspection reports were written in a continuous text format which, given the volume of information they need to convey, tended to be long, detailed and difficult for the lay person and most stakeholders to understand. Therefore, inspection reports for the further education and vocational training sector in particular, have been streamlined to convey the inspection findings more clearly. The format of these reports has been refined to incorporate short evaluative statements, which summarise the positive practice, and **areas for development**, and these statements by their nature can be classified into positive and negative groups.

For the data analysis, the number and weight of the **positive practice** statements and **areas for development**<sup>7</sup> have been considered to form a detailed picture of the factors contributing to the grades awarded at each of the two inspection visits. Given that Education Scotland as a basis for inspection methodology has used the quality indicators successfully over a number of years, there is an element of validity and reliability built into this data analysis.

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<sup>7</sup> Naturally, there are drawbacks to the approach of simple frequency analysis which should be acknowledged.

One point of note is that the twelfth *quality indicator*, relating to capacity for improvement, is determined through the consolidation of all of the **positive practice** and **areas for development** in the preceding eleven *quality indicators*. Therefore, when considering the evaluative statements for this *quality indicator*, an overall readout of scale and balance between **positive practice** and **areas for development** can be established.

We will see later in the findings from primary sources how the approach to data gathering in the field work has been aligned with the series of *quality indicators* found in the inspection reports. This is intended to support the analysis of data through a thematic approach and to strengthen the opportunities for corroboration between the secondary and primary data sources.

### 6.3.3 Analysis of the quality indicator data

A systematic analysis of the two inspection reports was undertaken using the methodology described above and from this, the author developed a summary of the evaluative statements for each quality indicator. Table 16 provides this detailed breakdown to show how the two inspection reports compare.

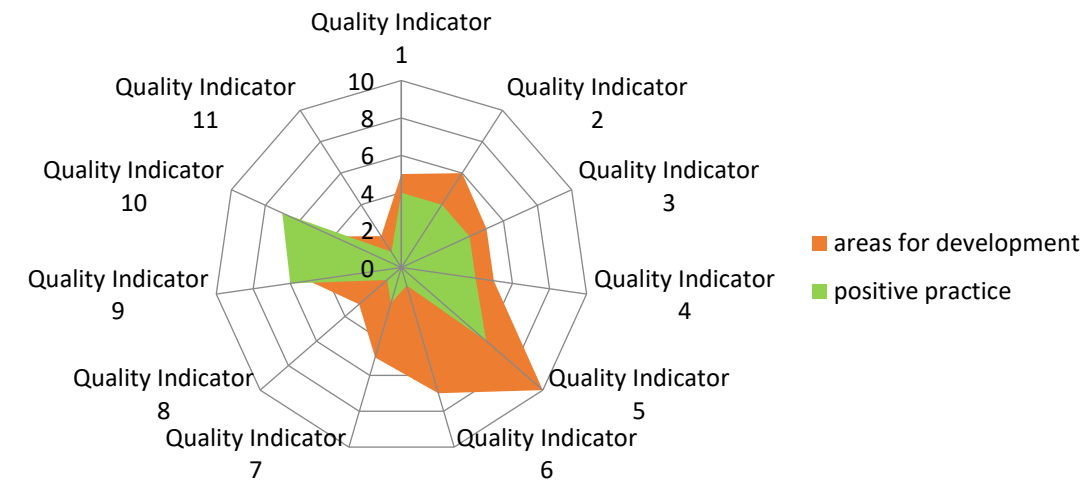
**Table 16 Comparison of positive practice and areas for development within the first inspection and second inspection reports at the case study centre**

Quality indicators within each high level question	Inspection findings			
	first inspection		second inspection	
How well are apprentices progressing and achieving relevant high quality outcomes?	positive practice	areas for development	positive practice	areas for development
<i>Quality Indicator 1.</i> How effective is the centre at achieving and maintaining high levels of service delivery?	4	6	5	0
<i>Quality Indicator 2.</i> How well do centres adhere to statutory principles and guidance?	4	5	6	1
How well do we meet the needs of our apprentices and stakeholders?	first inspection		second inspection	
	positive practice	areas for development	positive practice	areas for development
<i>Quality Indicator 3.</i> How well do apprentices make progress and achieve individual outcomes?	4	7	5	0
<i>Quality Indicator 4.</i> How well does training meet the needs of apprentices and employers?	4	5	5	2
How good is our delivery of training?	first inspection		second inspection	
	positive practice	areas for development	positive practice	areas for development
<i>Quality Indicator 5.</i> How well does training meet the needs of apprentices and employers?	6	9	10	1
<i>Quality Indicator 6.</i> How well is training delivered?	1	8	7	1
<i>Quality Indicator 7.</i> How well do staff reflect on provision to improve training?	2	2	5	1
<i>Quality Indicator 8.</i> How well do employers and apprentices participate in the development and planning of training?	1	6	3	1
How good is our management of training delivery?	first inspection		second inspection	
	positive practice	areas for development	positive practice	areas for development

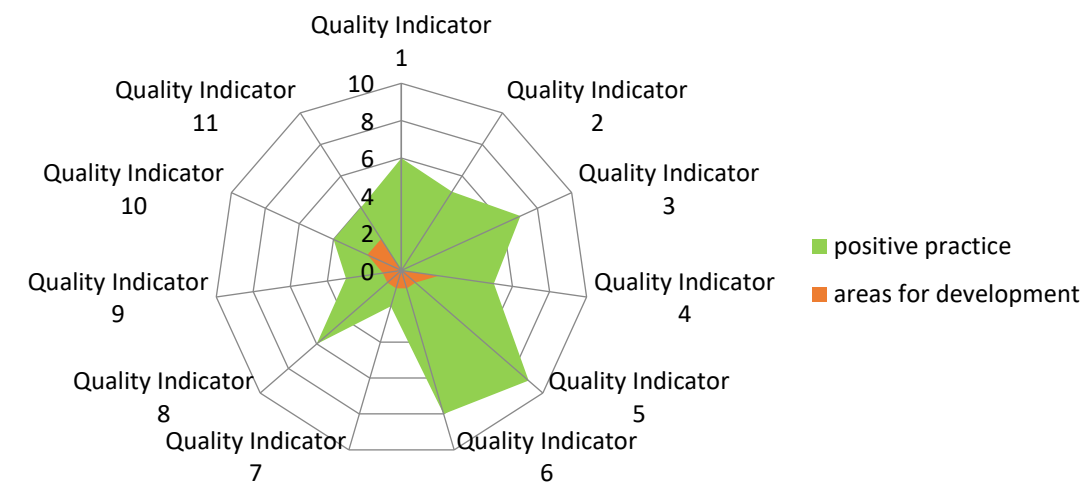
<b>Quality Indicator 9.</b> How well does the centre work with partners to improve outcomes for apprentices?	6	3	5	1
<b>How good is our strategic leadership?</b>	first inspection		second inspection	
	positive practice	areas for development	positive practice	areas for development
<b>Quality Indicator 10.</b> How effective is leadership for partnership working and delivery of training?	7	4	4	2
<b>Quality Indicator 11.</b> How well do leaders secure improvements in the quality and impact of training?	1	4	2	2
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Capacity to Improve</b>  <b>Quality Indicator 12.</b> How good are our internal evaluation and self-reflection activities to ensure we have the capacity to improve and enhance our provision and delivery?	first inspection		second inspection	
	positive practice	areas for development	positive practice	areas for development
	6	23	13	6
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>18</b>

By using a graphical illustration of the data collated in Table 16, we can observe more clearly the balance of **positive practice** and **areas for development**. Graphs 1 and 2 demonstrate the features of the first eleven *quality indicators* for each inspection report as radar graph.

**Graph 1**      **Comparison of the evaluative statements for the first eleven *quality indicators* in the first inspection**



**Graph 2**      **Comparison of the evaluative statements for the first eleven *quality indicators* in the second inspection**



The two radar graphs summarise conveniently the extent of the improvements made by the case study centre between the two inspection visits. It is evident from these graphs that there is a substantial difference in the balance of evaluative statements relating to **positive practice** and **areas for development** for the first eleven *quality indicators*.

Graph 1 shows that for the first eight quality indicators, the **areas for development** outweigh, by some margin in many instances, the **positive practice**. These *quality indicators* relate to; education practice, levels of apprentice attainment, meeting the needs of employers and the quality of training delivery. Conversely, we can see from Graph 2 that the areas of **positive practice** exceed the **areas for development** for every quality indicator, and by clear margins. For the three *quality indicators* relating to leadership and quality culture there is however less divergence in the positive practice and areas for development.

Using the findings of the first inspection as a benchmark, the levels of apprentice attainment and quality of training experienced by apprentices was determined as less than satisfactory. The graphs above illustrate that at the time of the second inspection, the levels of apprentice attainment and the education practice that apprentices experienced had improved considerably.

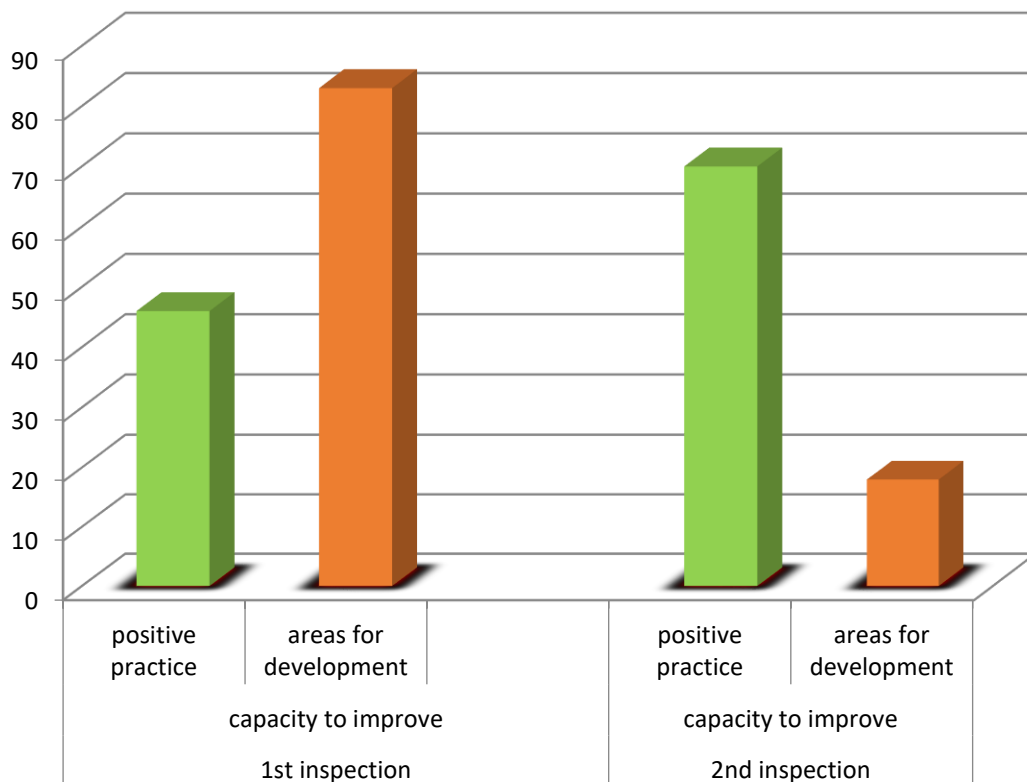
It is worth reflecting briefly on the three *quality indicators* for leadership and quality culture as these did not vary to the same extent as the other eight *quality indicators*. This could be attributed to the need for a minimum level of organisational management within the training centre that operates across all programmes offered and not just the Modern Apprenticeship programme under scrutiny. Therefore, the balance of positive practice and areas for development are not associated entirely with the Modern Apprenticeship programme and their effect is attenuated. Without a more extensive enquiry across the full range of programmes offered at the case study centre, it would be challenging to determine the full reasons behind this effect. It would be reasonable to assume however, that the core leadership and quality arrangements were functioning at



an acceptable level and that the focus on improvement was on education practice and levels of apprentice attainment.

As mentioned previously, the twelfth *quality indicator*, capacity for improvement, provides an overall readout of how well the case study centre has performed. Graph 3 shows the transition of positive practice and areas for development between the two inspection visits and illustrates clearly how the Modern Apprenticeship programme moves from a mostly negative state to one that is entirely more positive.

**Graph 3** Overall totals of positive practice and areas for development for the twelfth quality indicator between inspections at the case study centre.



This twelfth quality indicator provides a very helpful indication of the overall performance of the Modern Apprenticeship programme against the full range of high levels questions and quality indicators. We can see from Graph 3 that the **areas for development** are almost twice that of those for **positive** practice at the first inspection visit. By the time of the second inspection visit, this condition has been completely reversed and the **areas for development** have been reduced considerably.

The analysis provides strong evidence that there has been a significant upward movement in **positive practice** and an even greater downward movement in **areas for development** between the two inspections. Overall, we can conclude that the quality of the Modern Apprenticeship programme, particularly in relation to education practice and levels of apprentice attainment, has improved substantially following the first inspection.

To offer a context to this quantitative data analysis, Table 17 provides a sample of the evaluative statements from the two inspection reports. These statements demonstrate some of the significant differences identified by inspectors. The examples are chosen as they concentrate on the quality indicators relating to education practice and apprentice attainment, which associates them directly with the analysis of primary data in the next section.

**Table 17 Sample evaluative statements across equivalent quality indicators between the first and second inspection reports for the case study centre.**

Quality Indicator	first inspection	second inspection
<b>Quality Indicator 1.</b> <i>How effective is the centre at achieving and maintaining high levels of service delivery?</i>	<p>Achievement rates are very low at 53% and have declined to 48% in the last contract period. This is well below the Scottish average.</p>	<p>The achievement rate improved significantly (15%) in 2016-17 and now sits at 68%.</p>
<b>Quality Indicator 4.</b> <i>How well does training meet the needs of apprentices and employers?</i>	<p>The Modern Apprenticeship programme is not tailored to meet the individual needs of employers or designed well to support the needs of apprentices.</p> <p>The majority of apprentices express low satisfaction with their programme and are concerned about completing the necessary practical assessments required for their apprenticeship.</p>	<p>The Modern Apprenticeship programme has been aligned to reflect better the current skills demand in the industry.</p> <p>All apprentices are enjoying their apprenticeship and feel supported fully by their teaching and support services staff.</p>
<b>Quality Indicator 6.</b> <i>How well is training delivered?</i>	<p>In many lessons, there is inappropriate sharing of training accommodation, poor mixed level teaching, failures of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment, unreliable Wi-Fi and some facilities are poor quality with out-dated equipment.</p> <p>Delivery of the Modern Apprenticeship programme is not planned well and is not consistent across the programme. As a result, apprentices do not experience equity of delivery whilst on the same programme.</p>	<p>Delivery of the Modern Apprenticeship programme is planned well and is consistent across the all programme delivery.</p> <p>Almost all training staff plan their sessions well to ensure that apprentices experience a variety of relevant learning activities.</p> <p>All training staff have up-to-date knowledge of the industry and use this experience to ensure that their delivery is current. This is valued by the apprentices.</p>
<b>Quality Indicator 7.</b> <i>How well do staff reflect on provision to improve training?</i>	<p>There are no consistent or formal arrangements to review learning and teaching or the quality of delivery of the Modern Apprenticeship programme.</p>	<p>Training staff share good practice across the team in a weekly meeting slot and this has led to the implementation of a number of improvements to programme delivery.</p>

#### 6.3.4 Summary of findings from secondary sources

It should be noted that this analysis is restricted to those elements inspected within the framework deployed by the inspection team; therefore, consistency of judgement is a consideration. It would be reasonable to assume however, that for the case study inspections the two sets of findings are reliable and consistent given the use of the same inspection framework and the same experienced inspectors using longstanding methods of evidence gathering.

The analysis of the reports from the two inspection visits has revealed that there were considerable and tangible improvements in education practice and levels of apprentice attainment between the two inspections. For example, the attainment of apprentices improved 15% between the two inspections and the employers and apprentices were substantially more satisfied with the Modern Apprenticeship programme. Most notable, is that all of the *quality indicators* improved significantly after the first inspection and in this respect the analysis suggests that in this case the inspection process had a positive impact.

To help contribute further to answering our research questions, we must move on to consider whether the improvements made can be attributed to the inspection process itself and the likelihood of the case study centre improving without the intervention of inspectors. It would also be helpful to explore the detail behind these improvements to understand better any association between the findings reported at the first inspection visit and the actions taken by the case study centre. In order to examine this aspect, the qualitative research aims to investigate the reasons behind the changes made within the case study centre at organisational level and most importantly, whether these changes were made as a direct result of the first inspection. The field work also considers whether there were any unintended consequences as a result of the inspection process.

## 6.4 Findings from primary sources - a summary from the qualitative element of the research

### 6.4.1 Introduction

This stage of the research explores the response of the case study centre to the process of inspection and the findings reported by inspectors. The field work builds on the secondary data analysis to improve our understanding of how the organisation developed after the first inspection, what improvements were made and the reasons why. This aspect of the research is designed to reveal the features underpinning the changes that led to the marked improvement in education practice and apprentice attainment.

As we have seen, the findings from the first inspection identified a considerable number of **areas for development** in relation to the Modern Apprenticeship programme at the case study centre. However, these issues were not confined to one feature of the Modern Apprenticeship programme, there were systemic failings at multiple points in the organisation and the remedial actions were not going to be straightforward. In order to establish the narrative behind the improvements made by the case study centre it was decided that a set of focus group interviews would be the most appropriate approach for the field work.

### 6.4.2 Rationale for the focus groups and design of the interview questions

The aim of the focus group interviews was to explore, across all levels of the organisation, the finer detail of how and why improvements were implemented through the experiences and opinions of participants. Another important theme of these interviews was to identify whether there were any unintended consequences of the inspection process.

A series of focus group meetings was determined based on the organisational levels of the case study centre including groups of apprentices, stakeholders and employers. A set of structured interviews was then devised for the board of

management, senior and middle management, training staff, support functions, facilities staff, stakeholders, apprentices and their employers. The focus group questions were developed as a sub-set of the two primary research questions, which are summarised as;

**What impact does scrutiny have on education practice and learner attainment?**

and;

**Does inspection support and drive improvement?**

These high-level research questions were then expanded to establish the following core set of interview questions;

#### **Core Set of Interview Questions**

- 1        How well do the aims of inspection policy achieve the overall policy goal?
- 2        What influence does inspection have on education practice?
- 3        Does inspection contribute to the resolution of development issues for the organisation or education practice?
- 4        What, if any, are the impeding and contributing factors for the achievement of inspection aims?
- 5        What are the key positive or negative impacts of inspection?
- 6        Are there any unintended consequences from inspection?

Recognising that the simple application of the same question set for each focus group was not likely to reveal robust or coherent data, this core set of six questions was contextualised and tailored for each organisational level and focus group. To support this process, an organisational relationship matrix was developed that focused the terminology of the question set for each group. This matrix was also used for collating and interpreting the participant responses.

The author devised these categories from his experience of organisation theory and practice in similar training organisations to the case study centre and drawing on some of the theories in the literature review. The matrix is presented in Table 18 to illustrate the various organisational relationships and organisational roles relative to the Modern Apprenticeship programme. The right hand column signifies the account taken of the context for focus group participants when designing the question sets.

**Table 18 Matrix of organisational relationships in the case study training centre and context of questions**

RELATIONSHIP WITHIN ORGANISATION	ORGANISATIONAL ROLE	CONTEXT OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
ACCOUNTABILITY RELATIONSHIP	Board members and chief executives are accountable overall for the actions, decisions and implementation of policy within the institution and answerable for resulting consequences. A poor inspection readout would be an issue of accountability for the Board.	High-level questions relating to policy, corporate resilience and risk. The wider impact of poor inspection reports for organisational reputation and ownership of improvement actions overall. Engagement with stakeholders.
RESPONSIBILITY RELATIONSHIP	Senior leaders have the responsibility to accomplish the institution's goals and provide their expertise on how these goals might be achieved. In their leadership role, they provide guidance to other teams to achieve these goals.	High level questions around upwards accountability to board members and chief executive. Planning and ownership of cross-organisational planning and improvement actions. Responsibility for leading and supporting teams to achieve goals.
DRIVER RELATIONSHIP	Middle managers drive the implementation of the institution's policies to achieve the desired objectives. They control resources, both physical and staffing.	Operational responsibility for implementing plans at programme level and delivery of training. Two-way communication with employers and their apprentices.
DIRECT EDUCATION PRACTICE RELATIONSHIP	Training staff deliver the Modern Apprenticeship programme within the guidelines and constraints set out by senior and middle managers and awarding bodies. They are in direct contact with the apprentices and most likely to influence the outcomes and experience of these apprentices.	Direct contact with apprentices and responsible overall for the training and attainment of these apprentices. Some contact with employers.
SUPPORT RELATIONSHIP	Support staff in training organisations are having an increasing impact on success rates for apprentices as they provide support for financial, mental health and other social aspects of their lives. Employers provide important elements of on-the-job training for apprentices as they provide significant input to their skills development and knowledge base.	Support staff are responsible for ensuring the equipment and facilities are fit for purpose. Also for the wider facilities available in the centre and personal support.  Employers offer the practical experience on-the-job practical experience that needs to be co-ordinated with the training elements.
CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP	Education partners, and apprentices in particular, are the consumers of the training provision provided by the institution and it is their experience and outcomes that Education Scotland focus on when evaluating training provision.	Experience of the apprentices' primary and that of their employers. The sum total of all the above relationships impacts directly on the education practice received and the levels of apprentice attainment.



Using this matrix as a guide to contextualise the enquiry for each focus group, a draft set of questions was then developed. Acknowledging the risk of working in isolation and being too close to the research, having an intimate knowledge of the inspection process, the author was keen to introduce an independent test of the question set. Accordingly, inspector colleagues and two chief executives of similar training centres, to gather their opinions on the nature and content, appraised the draft question set and focus group categories. The final question set was then revised in line with this feedback and the full details can be found in the Interview Plan (Appendix 3).

With the very helpful co-operation of the case study centre, a programme of structured focus group interviews was then devised based on the Interview Plan. A full set of guidelines, rationale and methodology for the field work was made available to the case study centre prior to the selection of participants and the centre was free to select those individuals involved. By design, almost all of the invited participants had experienced both the first and second inspection of this Modern Apprenticeship programme. The rationale for selecting participants was to provide a direct comparison of experiences between the two inspection visits and maximise the opportunities to bring out common themes in order to improve data validity.

The participants in the field work interviews were Board Members, the chief executive, senior leaders and managers, professional staff, employers, education partners and apprentices involved with the two inspections of the Modern Apprenticeship programme at the case study centre. Young people and adults who were nominated by the case study institution were given the opportunity not to participate as appropriate and all apprentices interviewed on the Modern Apprenticeship programme were, by definition, of an age of legal capacity.

The list of participants is as follows:

- The chair of the Board of Management and the chief executive of the case study institution.
- A focus group of members of the senior management team (4 people)
- A focus group of members of the operational management team (6 people)
- A focus group of members of the teaching/training staff (5 people)
- A focus group of members of support staff (5 people)
- Individual interviews with employers who engage with the Modern Apprenticeship programme (4 people)
- Individual interviews with educational partners of the centre (3 people)
- Two focus groups of apprentices (8 apprentices per group)

It was recognised that the knowledge of the inspection process and the cognitive understanding of the participants would vary considerably from group to group and individual to individual. That is to say, each participant would most likely have their own perspective on the impact of inspection based on their role or experience of the Modern Apprenticeship programme. Potentially this could create a different understanding of the aims of the research within the focus groups. To minimise this effect, a comprehensive briefing sheet was created for each participant explaining the purpose of the interviews and areas for exploration within the research context. This briefing sheet was sent to all participants in advance of the field work being carried out and discussed at the start of each focus group meeting.

The interview themes and questions along with the Education Scotland arrangements document for inspecting Modern Apprenticeships (Education Scotland, 2017) were also provided in advance of the field work to establish a context for the professional dialogue. Each participant was asked to contribute to a single face-face interview or focus group discussion lasting between thirty and forty minutes and for external stakeholders, a telephone interview lasting

around ten minutes. All questions were of an open type to allow individuals to summarise their response in their preferred style. Every effort was made to protect the confidentiality of all participants, whilst recognising that in some circumstances, confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee, for example if harm or danger to participants was disclosed.

#### 6.4.3 The field work experience

Overall, the field work proceeded very smoothly and as planned, with all meetings very well attended. All participants were very enthusiastic and keen to talk about their experience of the first inspection, how they felt about the poor performance identified by inspectors and what had been achieved between the two inspections. This positive attitude was very helpful in uncovering the detail behind the areas for development, and it was pleasing to find that the process was both highly professional and constructive.

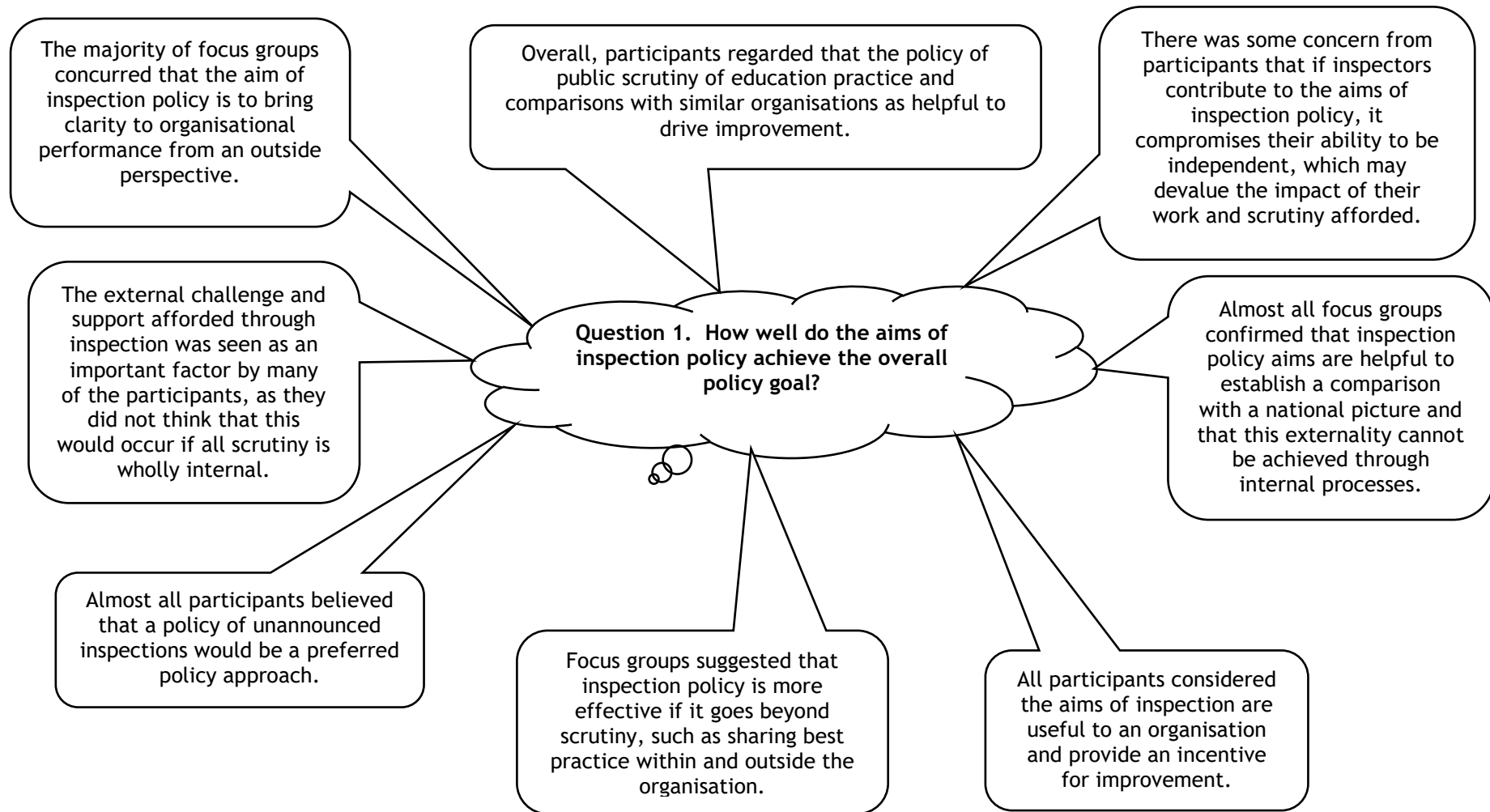
The next section presents a selection of the most prominent responses taken from the transcript of replies gathered during the focus group discussions, presented under each of the six core questions.

#### 6.4.4 Presentation of findings from the field work

This section endeavours to determine how well the field work contributes to answering the research questions. An overview is presented of the most notable responses to the core set of six questions, and for clarity each question is placed in the centre of an infographic. The findings are gathered from across the range of focus groups and organised on the basis of the relevance of each response to each question. After each infographic there follows an analysis of the evidence gathered and a synopsis of how well the evidence contributes answers to the research questions.

Responses from the first question are summarised in Figure 6.

**Figure 6** Responses from the first research question



## Analysis of evidence for Question 1

### How well do the aims of inspection policy achieve the overall policy goal?

Almost all respondents across the range of focus groups agreed that inspection achieves its policy aims. The evidence suggests that they feel comfortable with external scrutiny and that an independent external perspective is a positive experience. As the chief executive pointed out;

“Inspection shines a spotlight, adds value and contributes to thinking”

Chief Executive

Participants’ at all organisational levels suggested that there is a strong relationship between the inspection findings and their own views of the organisation. This association conveyed an authenticity to the process as they found the inspection findings to be a helpful readout of the current situation and to providing an incentive to improve. At operational level, Modern Apprenticeship programme team members and training staff were very positive about the inspection process.

“I can see no down-side to external scrutiny from impartial agencies”

Modern Apprenticeship programme team member

and;

“All organisations should have an external inspection”.

Training staff member

Many focus groups suggested that the inspection process was more effective than expected, as the findings of inspectors corresponded well their own evaluation of the organisation.

There was also a wider effect noted from first inspection visit, which is more evident in later responses, around the themes of internal relationships and organisational culture.

“Inspection opens peoples’ eyes to things, for example where staff and managers may not be working well together”

Senior Manager

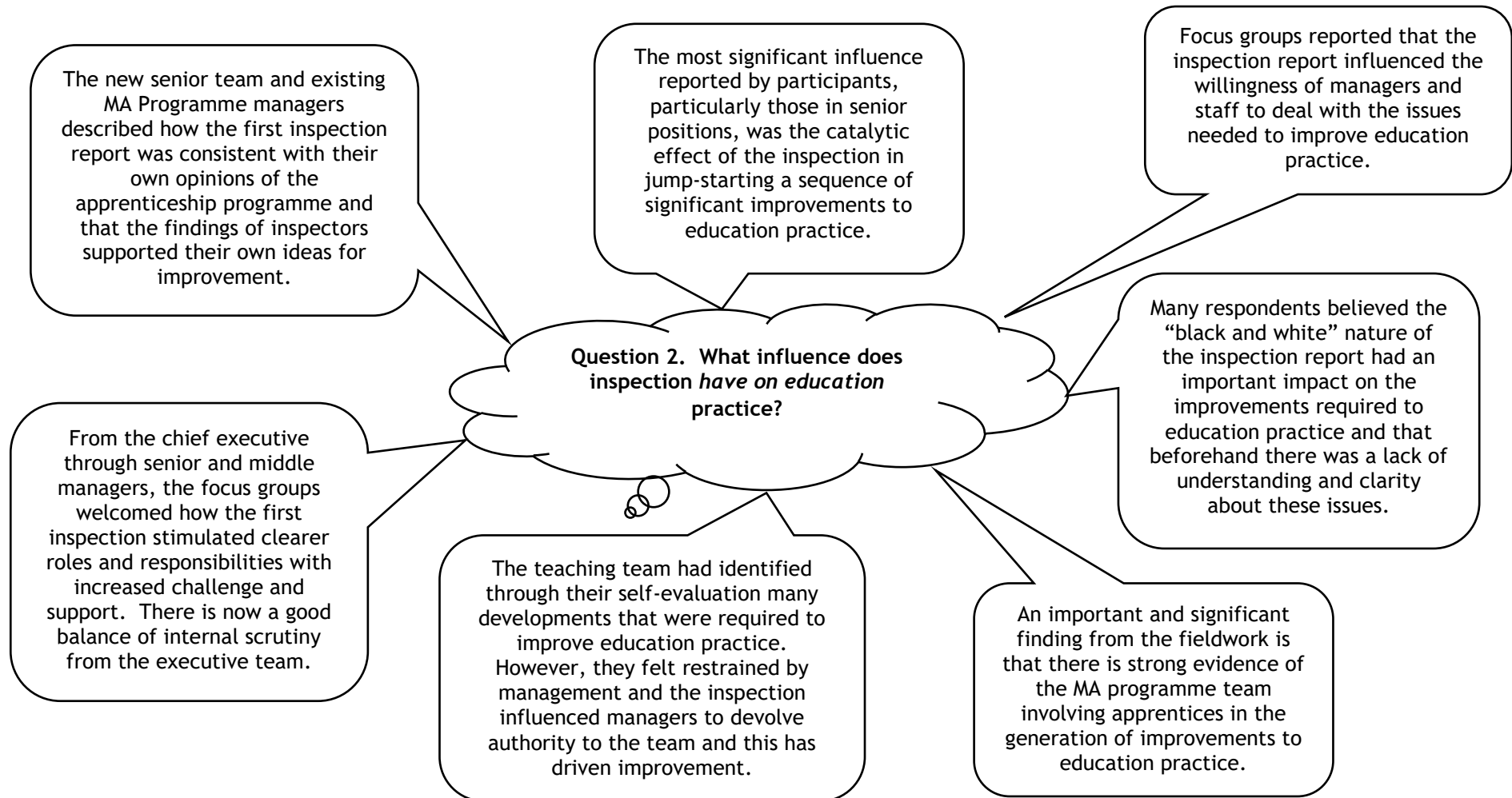
The overwhelming view from participants was that they were keen to maintain a system of robust external scrutiny, many emphasising that inspections would be even more effective if they were unannounced. Notably, no participants indicated any objection to the policy aims of inspection or the process of inspection. All participants responded that in their view the aims of the policy of inspection had been achieved fully.

Synopsis for Question 1.

Based on the evidence gathered here, inspection policy does achieve its policy aims and, across the range of focus groups, there was very strong support for the inspection process. If we return to the dual aims of the Education Scotland inspection arrangements, which are scrutiny and support for improvement, then the inspection process has met these aims. The independent external evaluation of the quality of education practice has set out clear statements for improvement and the training centre has taken these forward.

Responses from the second question are summarised in Figure 7.

**Figure 7** Responses from the second research question



## Analysis of evidence for Question 2.

### What influence does inspection *have on education practice*?

From the responses given in the focus groups, we can deduce that the inspection findings harmonise with a considerable number of challenges already present in the organisation. There appears to be an acknowledgement that prior to the first inspection “*things were not right*”, as articulated by a member of the teaching staff.

“We were frustrated previously and welcomed the intervention of the first inspection; it gave weight to our arguments and support for our ideas to improve”

Training staff member

It could be considered that without the external scrutiny and formal reporting by inspectors, the leadership team, managers and training staff were unwilling, or unable, to make the required improvements to education practice and apprentice attainment. The following quote from a senior manager is a strong indication at the time of the senior team’s inability to influence education practice.

“Would education practice have improved without the first inspection - **NO!**”

Senior manager

The intervention of the first inspection appears to have created an incentive for change, notwithstanding an immediacy to make improvements. The formal inspection report provided clear guidance to the case study centre for improving education practice and apprentice attainment. This provided a legitimacy to make the changes required, as summarised by a member of the Modern Apprenticeship programme team.

“The first inspection was a catalyst, a stimulus and an incentive for change”.

Modern Apprenticeship programme team member



The desire to change appears to have been embedded deeply into the organisation, as reported by the focus group of training staff who recognised that improvements to education practice were required urgently. There had been a motivation to make improvements and for whatever reason these were being suppressed.

“We were frustrated previously and welcomed the intervention of the first inspection, as we were trying to change and improve from within”

#### Training staff

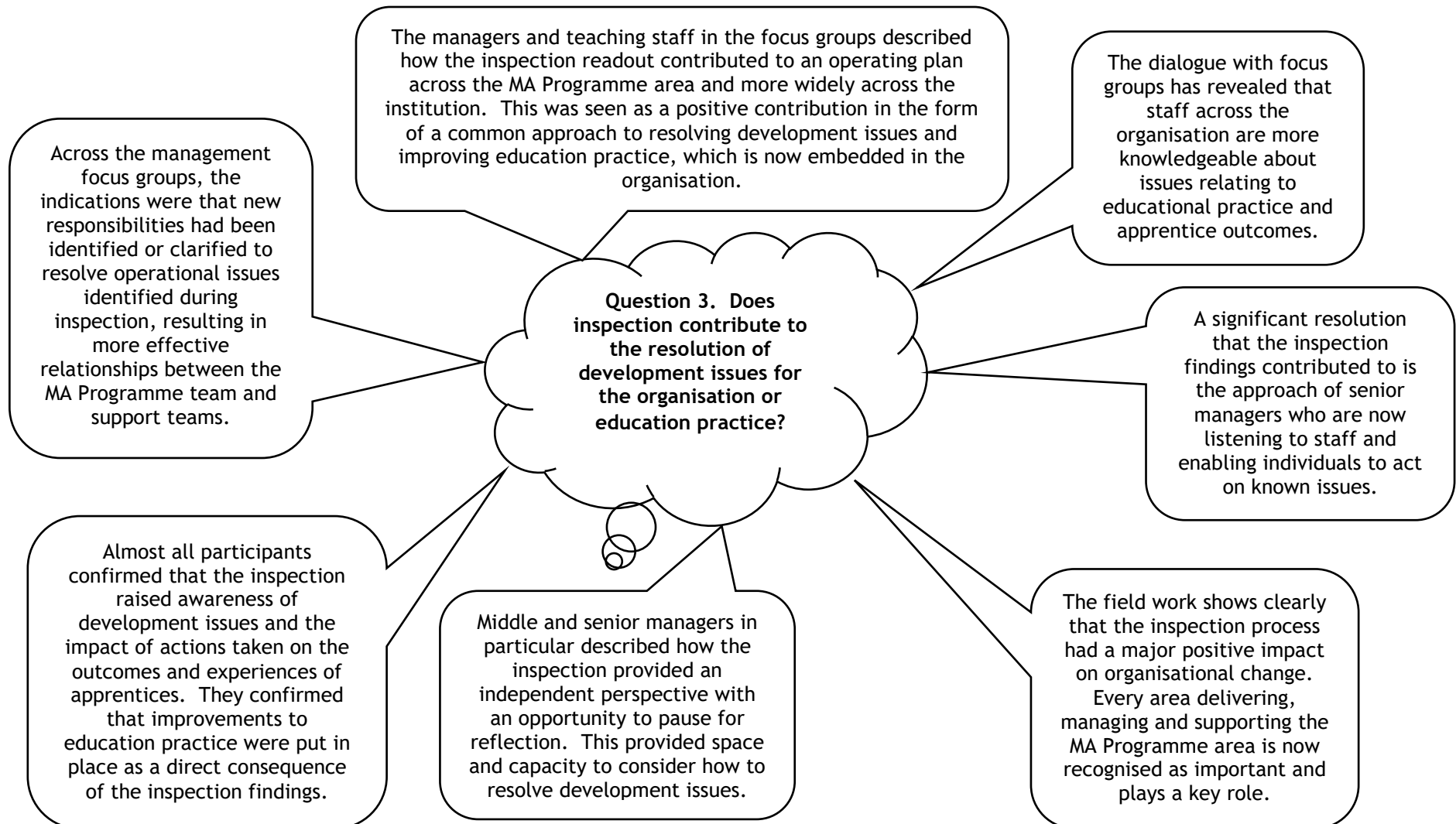
Clearly, after the first inspection there was a much greater focus on assessing how any improvement actions taken would impact on education practice and apprentice attainment. Furthermore, there was support provided for the training staff in implementing these improvements. There is also further evidence of organisational change signalled by improved internal relationships and the inclusion of apprentices in planning improvements to the Modern Apprenticeship programme.

#### Synopsis for Question 2.

In the example of the case study centre, the inspection process has had a substantial influence on education practice and levels of apprentice attainment by providing a platform and incentive for significant improvements across the whole of the Modern Apprenticeship programme. There has also been a wider impact across the organisation with improved relationships between managers, the Modern Apprenticeship programme team and training staff.

Responses from the third question are summarised in Figure 8.

**Figure 8** Responses from the third research question



### Analysis of evidence for Question 3.

#### **Does inspection contribute to the resolution of development issues for organisational or education practice?**

A new chief executive was appointed after the first inspection had taken place who recognised that the independent scrutiny provided by inspectors was helpful to support an analysis of the organisation.

“It is important as a leader of the organisation to have an independent external validation of you own self-evaluation “

Chief Executive

The outcomes of the first inspection were used well by the managers and the Modern Apprenticeship programme team to create a comprehensive action plan based on the findings of the first inspection. It became clear from the focus group discussions that without the intervention of an inspection, the organisation was unlikely to develop this plan or make the step changes required to improve education practice and apprentice attainment. There was also an acknowledgment by managers that to make the improvements required, all areas of the organisation needed to work together as their roles were interdependent. One senior manager highlighted the connection between the externality of the inspection and internal relationships.

“We are dependent on the people and resources within the organisation; therefore an external eye is very important”

Senior Manager

This acknowledgment by senior management of the importance of the people in the organisation identifies another theme where the inspection appears to have functioned as an enabler of change. Evidence from focus groups identified that before the inspection, the development issues of staff were disregarded and that following on from the first inspection a process for the development of all staff in the organisation was initiated. Additionally, the centre introduced a performance management process for staff to provide internal assurance of the

standards of education practice across all programmes delivered by the training centre. Clearly, the actions taken after the first inspection were amplified across the organisation and did not remain solely within the Modern Apprenticeship programme area under scrutiny.

Discussions also revealed that participants believe the first inspection contributed a great deal to the resolution of issues within the Modern Apprenticeship programme area and beyond. There is reference to the first inspection findings providing what is effectively a “*blueprint for improvement*”. Awareness raising and ‘*getting things out in the open*’ also appear to be contributory factors to a positive change in management style and organisational culture. The most significant improvements impacted on the apprentices and employers who were able to articulate their thoughts based on their experience before the first and after the second inspection.

“We saw a lot of big improvements between the two inspections including resources, scheduling of assessments, training materials and staff attitudes”

Apprentices

“We now have much better relationships with the training centre and communication is now a two-way process, with much more trust and openness”

Employer

Discussions in the focus groups provided confirmation that the organisation had benefitted from a distributed effect, as improvements made in response to the first inspection contributed beyond the Modern Apprenticeship programme. At the time of the second inspection, revised planning processes and quality assurance arrangements were being emulated across all other Modern Apprenticeship programmes at the training centre.

“We now have a distributed effect of the interventions for improvement from the first inspection across the rest of the organisation”.

Support team member

and;

“On the basis of the improvement plans and process for this inspection, we are now adopting a similar analysis and improvement approach across other Modern Apprenticeship programme areas, which will benefit many more apprentices”

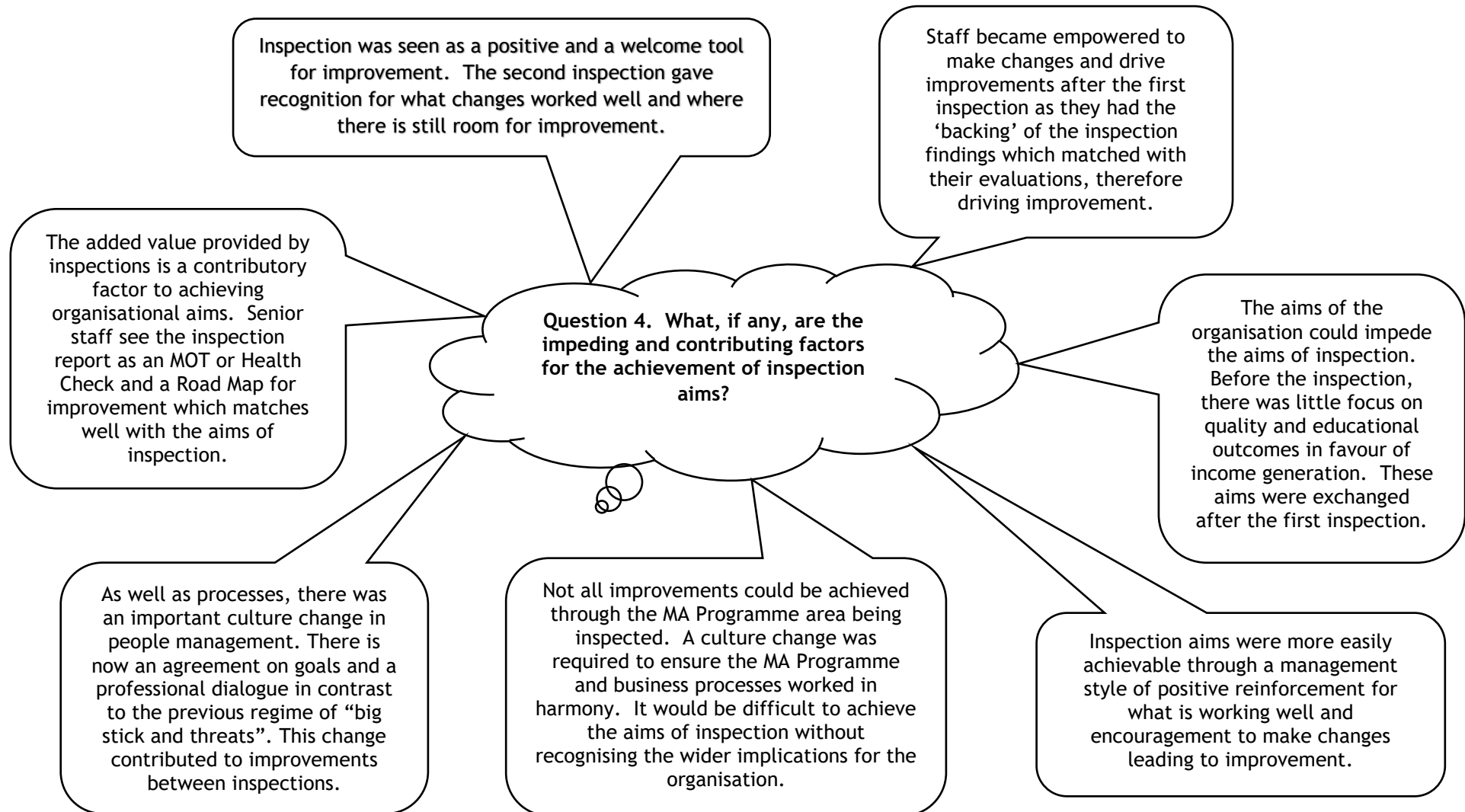
Modern Apprenticeship programme team member

Synopsis for Question 3.

The evidence suggests that the findings from first inspection conferred an authority within the organisation to bring about change that was probably not going to occur naturally. In this respect, the inspection made a considerable contribution to the resolution of development issues by framing a set of actions for improvement, setting out a realistic timeframe and preparing for a re-examination of the Modern Apprenticeship programme during the second inspection. There were clearly significant and tangible improvements to education practice and apprentice attainment, as evidenced by apprentices and employers that had experienced the training delivery before and after the two inspections took place.

Responses from the fourth question are summarised in Figure 9.

**Figure 9** Responses from the fourth research question



### Analysis of evidence for Question 4.

**What, if any, are the impeding and contributing factors for the achievement of inspection aims?**

It is not possible to determine whether the first inspection triggered the major change in leadership roles. However, this is not uncommon in organisations that have been shown to be performing poorly through independent scrutiny, and this should be recognised as a potential unintended consequence.

Two quotes from senior managers illustrate the journey and distance travelled by the organisation between the two inspection visits.

**“By allowing people to become the specialist they are meant to be, ownership and empowerment have flourished”**

Senior Manager

**“There was a noticeable shift by training staff from “moaning” and “acceptance of poor results” to demanding change for improvement.”**

Senior Manager

The areas for development raised by inspectors seem to have bought about an ownership of the improvement actions for the managers and Modern Apprenticeship team. However, we must consider how much of this ownership was stimulated by the inspection itself and one indicator of this is the relative importance given to the judgements made by inspectors. Having the support of the chief executive for the authenticity of the findings of inspectors appears to have been an essential driver of improvement.

**“The credibility of the inspectors is very important and this comes with Education Scotland”**

Chief Executive

This is a powerful message and there appears to have been little or no resistance to the inspection process achieving its aims in relation to improvement. The most significant factor here is the creation of a new management approach with a distinct move away from ‘*command and control*’ to shared ownership and

understanding. The change process encouraged staff in less senior positions to have a stronger voice and articulate what improvements were likely to create lasting improvements to education practice. This illustrates evidence of organisational and cultural change, which is not an inspection aim, but appears to have been a positive unintended consequence for this training centre.

#### **Synopsis for Question 4.**

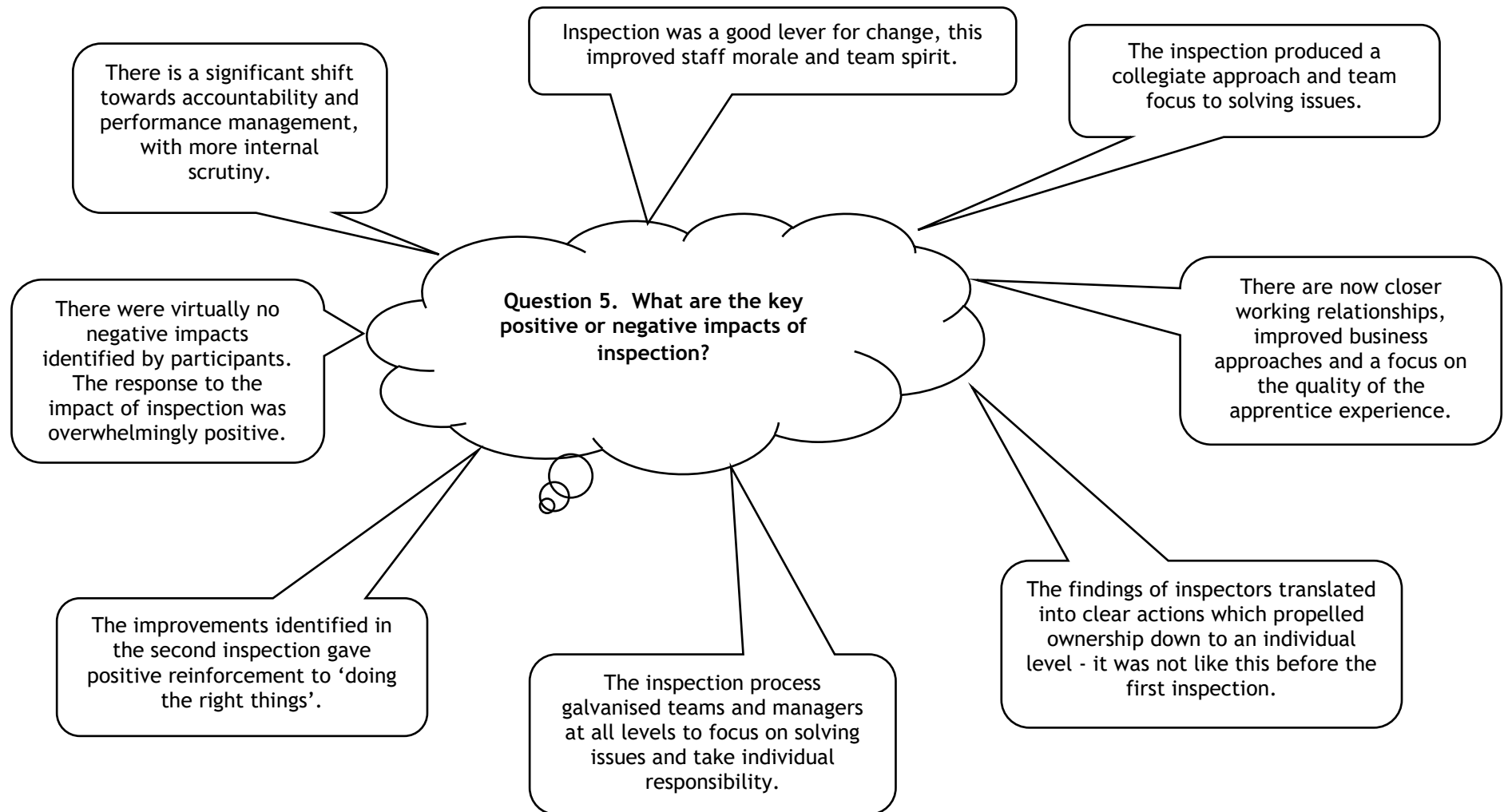
The dual roles of inspection are clearly played out in this case study with the scrutiny aspect providing a readout of the quality of the Modern Apprenticeship programme together with a record of those aspects requiring improvement. Discussions from the focus groups reveal that the approach of the senior team in developing an action plan for improvement based on the first inspection made a significant contribution to making substantial improvements.

In this case, the inspection process appears to have delivered its dual aims without impedance. It would have been quite understandable for the senior leadership to abandon this particular Modern Apprenticeship programme as it was performing so poorly. However, the first inspection was seen as an opportunity rather than a threat and a positive change in culture was achieved. This systemic effect is likely to continue to deliver improvements to education practice and apprentice attainment, not just in the Modern Apprenticeship programme inspected, but also across the whole organisation.

Responses from the fifth question are summarised in Figure 10.



**Figure 10**      **Responses from the fifth research question**



### Analysis of evidence for Question 5.

#### What are the key positive or negative impacts of inspection?

Responses to this question indicate that culture change appears to be the most prominent outcome for the organisation between the two inspections. There are several references to a change in leadership style and how this has resulted in a positive distributed leadership arrangement.

There were also many references made regarding a willingness to improve, for example wanting better teaching facilities, to improve the learning environment and being less prepared to accept '*normal*'. The authority of the report from a notable agency such as Education Scotland appears to have prompted an immediate and comprehensive response from the new senior team. As one member of teaching staff commented;

“The inspection opened a Pandora’s box”

Training staff member

Additionally, the focus groups indicated that the initial inspection readout was primarily a stimulus for change, as there had been a latent and genuine motivation to create improvements to education practice and apprentice attainment. Many respondents talked about improved morale and team spirit;

“Inspection is positive and a welcome tool for improvement and the recognition of what works well”

Support team member

Strong leadership was obviously required to prevent the re-occurrence of any areas for development identified at the first inspection visit and this was evidenced by major changes in process. One example cited is the automatic recruitment of apprentices by the business side of the organisation to meet quotas and funding targets. This took place without any consultation with the Modern Apprenticeship programme team regarding the suitability or potential of the apprentices who applied. This approach contributed to many apprentices

leaving their Modern Apprenticeship programme early, or not achieving in the timeframe allocated to complete an apprenticeship. Changes to processes such as this required buy-in from the wider management team, and all training staff, to create more effective working relationships. These changes were supplemented by robust and systematic process monitoring by senior management. Changes such as this had a very positive effect on levels of apprentice attainment and the evidence considered in the secondary data analysis confirms this.

“Inspection initiated a constant cycle of monitoring so this would not happen again”

Senior Manager

Responses to this question also indicate that the findings of inspectors helped foster a devolved leadership approach that had built on the skills and experience of individuals. Better communication and improved development opportunities were side effects of reacting to the inspection findings and these were recognised as vitally important to foster an atmosphere of trust and openness. Notably, there were no negative impacts of inspection identified in any of the focus groups, even though the first inspection readout was entirely critical of the training centre.

### **Synopsis for Question 5.**

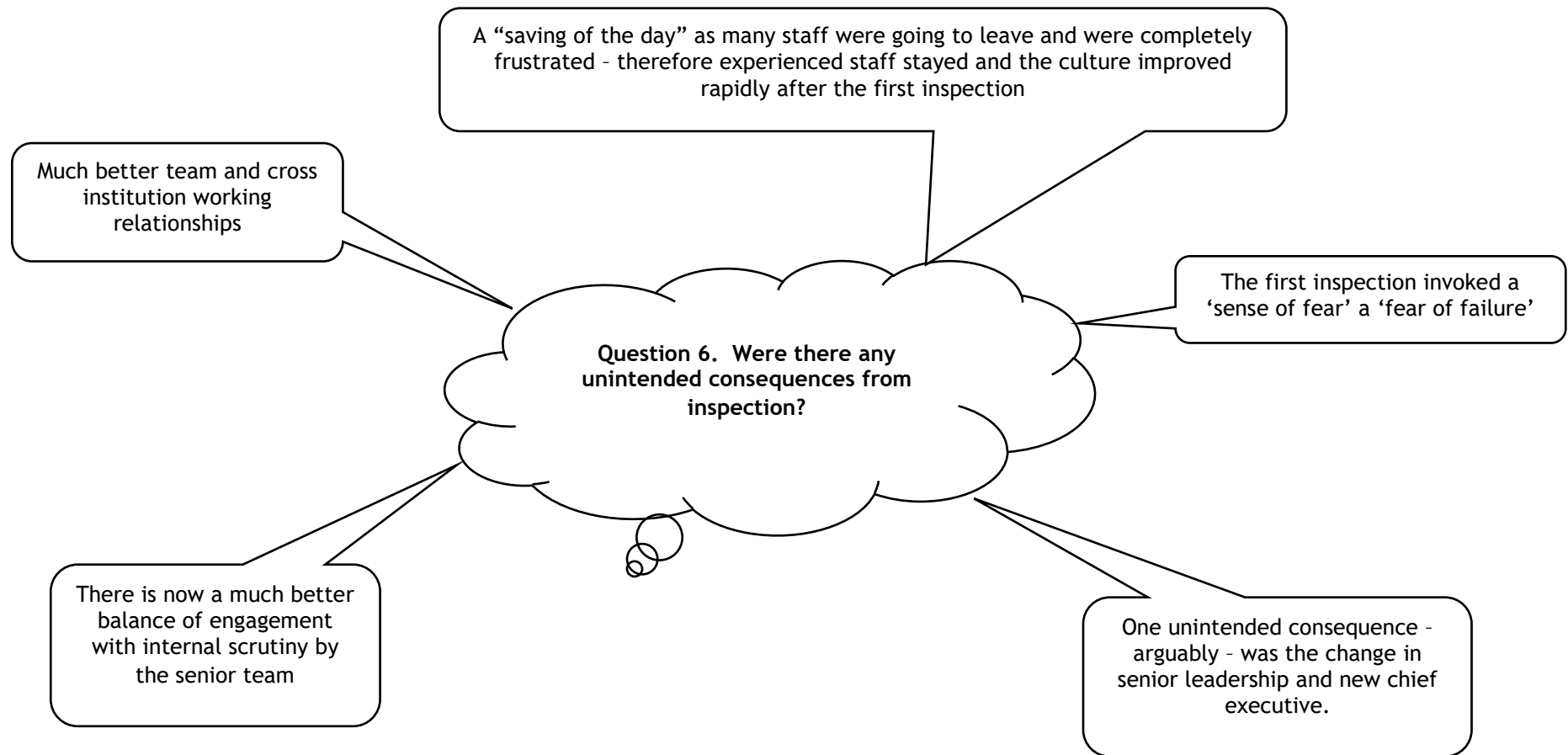
For this case study, the inspection process appears to have had a significant impact on organisational culture. The organisation improved across all functional levels in relation to accountability and devolved responsibility, allowing positive changes to be made. Based on the responses of participants, there appears to be little or no negative impacts experienced from the inspection process. Participants spoke confidently about improved working practices, enriched management relations and a return of a sense of pride in their delivery of the Modern Apprenticeship programme.

Inspection can often be thought of as a mechanistic process that produces a sterile readout of performance. However, for this training centre in particular,

the process has filtered deep into organisational culture to bring about positive change and improved working practices, in addition to improved education practice and apprentice attainment. In this respect, we see that the dual aims of inspection have been achieved and they have been very effective. We can also observe again, the unintended consequence of organisational change.

Responses from the sixth question are summarised in Figure 11.

**Figure 11**      **Responses from the sixth research question**



### Analysis of evidence for Question 6.

#### **Were there any unintended consequences from inspection?**

The outcomes of the first inspection report were clearly a shock to the organisation, although the interview questions did identify that staff lower down in the organisational structure were aware of many issues, but their voice was not being heard. It is not clear why senior managers were unsighted to the issues within the Modern Apprenticeship programme, or more widely across the organisation. Without an opportunity to interview the original senior managers who left the case study centre after the first inspection, it is not possible to comment on this aspect. Overall, for the board of management and new senior team the inspection process opened their eyes to unknown issues in the organisation and helped them to implement changes that had a substantial impact.

At the time of the first inspection, training staff reported that they were unwilling to tolerate for much longer the low levels of apprentice attainment and in this sense, the inspection findings were not unexpected. After the first inspection, the fear of failing again, or not improving, appears to have driven the improvement process swiftly and comprehensively, leading to the much more favourable outcomes in the second inspection.

“There was some evidence of a ‘fear factor’ from managers of other MA Programme areas who had seen the poor performance highlighted by the inspection”.

Senior and middle managers

We can observe therefore, that the main unintended consequence is in relation to organisational change, both within the Modern Apprenticeship programme under scrutiny and more widely across the organisation.

“There has been a distinct improvement in morale and professional pride since the second inspection and improved relationships with other MA Programme areas across the organisation.”

Modern Apprenticeship programme team member

This is a substantial turnaround from how staff felt before the first inspection.

“Achieving poor results takes the enjoyment out of my job. Many staff in the MA programme area, particularly those who also work as professionals in industry, were actively looking to leave the training centre”.

Teaching staff member

Prior to the first inspection, it is clear that many training staff did not want to be associated with poor education practice and low levels of apprentice attainment. This was affecting their professional reputation based on the stigma of working for sub-standard training provider. Potentially, without the first inspection, the organisation could have lost a large number of experienced staff in a very short time.

Synopsis for Question 6.

There is evidence of organisational learning from the inspection process that was not intended at the outset based on the original policy aim of sampling a Modern Apprenticeship programme for a national report. This organisational learning has propagated across other departments within the case study centre by providing an outline agenda for evaluating and improving education practice and apprentice attainment.

A direct link cannot be proven fully, however it is notable that the chief executive left the case study centre very soon after the findings of the first inspection were communicated. This is also recognised as a potential unintended consequence of the inspection process.

## 6.5 Conclusions from the findings of secondary and primary data analysis

We have determined from the analysis of primary data that substantial improvements occurred in education practice and levels of learner attainment between the two inspection visits. The detailed analysis of *quality indicators* from the two inspection reports revealed that, for every element relating to education practice, the case study centre responded well to the areas for development and implemented improvements that were highly effective. When exploring the narrative behind these improvements during the field work, it became clear that the first inspection was a catalyst for action and a motivator for organisational change. The element of organisational learning was an unintended consequence, as this is not a policy aim of scrutiny or of the inspection methodology.

There are two main observations to make regarding the response of the case study centre to the first inspection. Firstly, a comprehensive action plan was developed based on the areas for development identified during the inspection process and this was driven forward enthusiastically by a new leadership team. Alongside this, there was a wide-ranging and systemic culture change that recognised the abilities of staff and empowered them with ownership for taking decisions.

The evidence gathered from participants in the focus groups indicates that the findings of inspectors, although highly critical at the first inspection, were interpreted positively to re-define internal policies and processes. The improved organisational culture was then used as a springboard to ensure these policies and processes delivered improvements to education practice, the apprentice experience and levels of apprentice attainment. Furthermore, some of these improvements permeated across the whole organisation with positive consequences and are now monitored robustly and systematically.



Considering the secondary and primary evaluations together, there is strong support from the analysis undertaken here for the theory that the inspection process led to improvement in education practice and apprentice attainment. Without the intervention of the first inspection, the organisation may not have improved or may have improved very slowly. At the time of the first inspection, it appears that the managers and training staff, although aware of the poor education practice and low apprentice attainment, were unable to identify the clear actions that were necessary to bring about improvement. Additionally, for those training staff who had identified where improvement was required, the previous management structure and organisational culture prevented them from taking action.

For this study, we need to consider the significance of the inspection process in relation to the motives and actions that achieved improvements to the apprentices' outcomes and experiences. Therefore, it is important to reflect in more detail on the interplay of other factors that might have contributed to improvements in this specific case. It is almost certain that a range of internal drivers relating to culture and practice within the case study institution were operating in parallel with the activities and findings of inspectors. At the very least, an intense focus on one particular area of curriculum, such as a targeted inspection, will have introduced some element of Hawthorne effects described earlier.

One of the most likely factors to have an effect on improvement in this case is leadership at all levels. This would encompass the new chief executive, the senior and middle leaders responsible for the curriculum and those responsible for support functions, including resources. Tim Simkins has written widely about the influences of organisational and management factors in education establishments such as leadership, culture and sectoral shifts. In his article *'What Works' or 'What Makes Sense'?* he explores some aspects of current thinking about leadership in education and argues that in the leadership world 'making sense of things' is at least as important as 'seeking what works'.

Simkins (2005) identifies a number of areas where leadership is important in bringing about change, one of which relates to the development of leaders and which is relevant in this study.

“My second point about leadership development is that it is crucial that leaders are provided with the tools to explore problems from a variety of perspectives.”

Simkins, (2005:21)

Relating Simkins’ work to this study, the first inspection might well have been a ‘sense check’ that the distributed leadership needed to provide a perspective on what was working in the organisation through an independent lens, highlighting what needed to be done to improve this Modern Apprenticeship programme. In this respect, it must be acknowledged that the inspection was only one factor in the improvement journey and the presence of a new chief executive with a fresh approach, along with senior leaders and a curriculum manager with a desire to create a good impression, cannot be overlooked as contributing to driving the improvements forward. Therefore, the inspection process may have been only one of the ‘tools’ that was used to by leaders to bring about improvement.

Furthermore, the institution would have been aware of potential reputational damage that a poor inspection outcome could engender with local employers, potential new apprentices, more widely in the local community and within this employment sector. This is particularly relevant to the earlier discussions concerning inspections becoming increasingly high-stakes. Within the evaluations of this study, it is accepted therefore that factors such as this, and others, would all be working simultaneously to have an impact on the outcomes of the inspection and the findings of the research.

The main factors in relation to these effects were considered in the literature review and are summarised here by Simkins;

The evolving policy environment which educational institutions have faced over the past 10 years in the United Kingdom has exerted a number of common pressures on those who lead and manage them. These pressures include:

- the need to 'perform' in the quasi-market and take a more 'customer-focused' approach to those whom they serve;
- the need to set and meet demanding targets in terms of measurable performance indicators which are set by central government or its agents;
- the need to exhibit 'appropriate' forms of management and organization which can be inspected and for which institutions can be held to account.

Simkins, (2000:330)

The common pressures identified above would have been operating synchronously with the findings of the inspection process to provide leaders at all levels with information and different perspectives of what was required to bring about the necessary improvements. Therefore, the inspection itself would not have been the sole reason for improving apprentice attainment and education practice, however it was a clearly a significant contributory factor.

Overall, the first inspection report provided an independent view of the areas for development and a legitimacy to implement the required improvements to this Modern Apprenticeship programme. This observation fits well with the dual aims of the inspection methodology identified in previous chapters. It is difficult to understand how the training centre might have gathered together the numerous areas for development and co-ordinated a plan of action to implement the improvements required without an independent outside perspective from inspectors.

In summary, the conclusion presented in this section based on the evidence generated from the data analysis and gathered during the field work strongly supports positive responses to the two primary research questions. That is to say;

**In this case, inspection policy has achieved the dual aims of delivering an independent readout of the quality of education practice along with a roadmap for improvement.**

and;

**In this case, scrutiny has had a positive impact on education practice and learner attainment.**

Furthermore, the inspection process also created a positive unintended consequence by improving considerably the organisational culture of the training centre. Whether this was as a result of changes in the leadership team or through other effects, this is something that this study will not be able to resolve. For whatever reason however, the step change in culture was a prominent factor in delivering the improvements required and identified by the inspection findings.

The next chapter moves on to present the conclusions that have been drawn from the research and practical investigations carried out in this study.

## 7. Chapter 6 Conclusions and implications

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### 7.1 Introduction

This final chapter brings together conclusions and implications for the findings of this study and makes informed judgements regarding the research aims. Each section offers an overview and critical reflection of the research undertaken, using the content approach outlined in Trzeciak and Mackay (1994).

The first section provides a summary of the key areas explored during the narrative literature review, how this was undertaken and the findings that emerged. In the second section, there is a summary of the examination carried out on Scottish Government policy initiatives for the further education and vocational training sector, along with the findings from an evaluation of one of these policies. The third section provides a synopsis of the secondary and primary data analysis, together with the overall conclusions drawn from this study in relation to the research aims. The final section presents conclusions from this research and a consideration of how the work undertaken contributes to the existing body of literature. This section also reflects on the limitations of this research and makes suggestions for extending the study further.

### 7.2 Key areas explored and findings from the literature review

Based on an initial examination of the available literature for the effectiveness of inspection within the further education and training sector, a more comprehensive search was made to explore bespoke academic articles, websites and journals, predominantly from the UK. The use of key-word searches located literature and articles relating to government agency policy, mainly in the school-based sector. These were helpful, although not many were centred on the relationships between inspection policy, education practice and learner attainment.

It soon became clear that there is only a small volume of literature to draw on to provide an understanding of the effectiveness of inspection in the further education and vocational training sector in general, and more specifically in Scotland. Arguably, there are parallel studies, both internationally and within the UK; however, these are based within dissimilar sectors, contexts and policy environments.

The predominant studies discovered to date are within a school-based setting or country specific. Exploring the probable connection between schools with consistently '*satisfactory*' performance ratings and a set of common priorities identified by inspectors for school improvement, provided a stimulus for the avenues of enquiry during the field work stages of this research. In addition, the work of Rosenthal offered an interesting perspective into the potential negative effects that inspection might have on education practice and learner attainment.

Whilst these studies provided some insight into the relationship between inspection and education practice, applicability to the Scottish context is very restricted. Therefore, when considering Scottish further education and vocational training explicitly, there does not appear to be any noteworthy research available, and little prevailing academic debate.

Based on the review of literature, a reasonable deduction was made that the focus on school-based studies is likely to have evolved from the higher demand for data and attainment comparators in public reporting. The political, public and media attention on the further education and vocational training sector is however, not so high-stakes.

At the close of the literature review, it was determined that gaps exist in the knowledge base for the impact of inspection policy more generally, and in particular there is no prominent research focus in Scotland.

### 7.3 Policy context and evaluation

This stage of the research comprised a detailed review of further education policy from the time that responsibility for education matters was devolved to the Scottish Government. This was subsequently narrowed further to concentrate on policies developed over the past ten years. Using a desk-top analysis approach, documents were identified relating to policy development for further education and vocational training, the majority of which were available through the Scottish Government website. These documents were collated into a convenient summary of the further education policy landscape in Scotland, which is likely to be of use to other researchers.

The overview of policy context identified that a large number of interrelated policies have been introduced over a relatively short period of time. Furthermore, for many of the policy aims there is an absence of associated targets, measurements or opportunities to feed back on their impact. With the assistance of theoretical and analytical models, it was decided that a full evaluation of further education and training policy across all sectors of Scottish education would be too wide a scope for this study. By applying analytical approaches such as the *policy cycle* and *logic models*, the research focus was narrowed to an evaluation of one policy, *Developing the Young Workforce*. It was established from the author's development of logic models that there is a missing feedback loop to evaluate fully the achievement of the aims of this policy. It was recognised that the introduction of new inspection arrangements for Modern Apprenticeships has partially closed this feedback loop. However, to evaluate the policy aims of this initiative fully, there is further work to be done in defining and measuring the long-term impact of this key Scottish Government policy.

Some bespoke and freelance research, such as that commissioned by the SFC to evaluate their strategies for quality enhancement in the Scottish further

education sector were identified. These provided helpful overviews to consider in relation to the central focus of this research.

Overall, my research into the policy context for Scottish further education and vocational training revealed that there is a disparity in the quantity of, and emphasis given to, the effectiveness of Scottish Government policy initiatives. Where evaluation has been carried out some feedback loops are overlooked, which diminishes any opportunities to determine fully the impact of long-term policy aims. This is an important finding given that the policy direction for education in Scotland has been self-determining since devolution. One could argue that new and different policies within revised education systems should be researched and evaluated appropriately to determine whether they are delivering their desired outcomes. In this respect, the research undertaken in this study can be considered a meaningful contribution to the currently available literature.

In relation to the introduction of government policy initiatives in general, there is a very wide portfolio of policy areas to legislate on, taking account of fluctuating political contexts. Therefore, it is highly likely that policy developers are content for their policies to achieve aims that *satisfy* most stakeholders and *suffice* for the length of time that a government has jurisdiction. This is in line with Simon's model of bounded rationality, leading policy makers to satisficing behaviour.

#### 7.4 Findings from the data analysis

The new inspection arrangements for Modern Apprenticeships, introduced by Education Scotland to provide evidence towards the achievement of policy aims for *Developing the Young Workforce*, provided an opportunity for a manageable research project. Theoretical and analytical approaches were employed to guide the research themes and field work design towards a single case study training centre that had been inspected recently by Education Scotland.



The formal inspection reports produced by Education Scotland offered a rich source of secondary data and these provided an opportunity to develop themes and research questions for exploration in the field work stage, yielding a primary data source. From these opportunities, it was decided that the methodological approach selected would be a mixed-method research design that would present an analysis of both secondary and primary data sources.

The secondary data source was harvested from the evaluative statements within two Modern Apprenticeship inspection reports produced by Education Scotland for the case study centre. These reports provided a rare and stimulating opportunity to research how the inspection process had affected the education practice and levels of apprentice attainment. The prospect of making direct comparisons between two inspection reports at one training centre within a close timeframe was a unique and welcome challenge. This element of the research provided a direct readout of distance travelled by the case study training centre between the two inspections and this data informed the core question set for focus group interviews.

The case study institution was highly receptive to taking part in this research and welcomed the opportunity to talk about their experience of the inspection process. The focus group interviews included all organisational levels from board members and chief executive, through management, training staff, apprentices and employers. The core question set for these focus groups was contextualised based on both the findings in the secondary data and the policy evaluation stages of the research. By maintaining this thread of consistency, it was relatively easy to correlate the findings of the primary and secondary data and draw conclusions in relation to the impact of the inspection process.

The focus group interviews produced valuable primary data that was cross-referenced with the analysis of secondary data to provide a summary of how well the research questions had been answered. Once analysed, the results

from the case study investigation were remarkably consistent and provided well-defined evidence in relation to the concepts researched.

Overall, based on the research undertaken for this study, and recognising that this is a single case with boundaries and limitations, my interpretation of the original research hypothesis is that;

**In this case, inspection policy has achieved the dual aims of delivering an independent readout of the quality of education practice along with a roadmap for improvement.**

and;

**In this case, scrutiny has had a positive impact on education practice and learner attainment.**

## 7.5 Conclusions, limitations and further research

### 7.5.1 Conclusions

From the review of available literature, I have found that there are very few studies relating to the impact of inspection on education practice and learner attainment. This element of the study established that almost all research activity is concentrated exclusively in the school-based sector, and there has been little attention paid to the influence or impact of inspection arrangements in the Scottish further education and vocational training sector. It is recognised that governments would wish to focus attention on the school-based sector and this theme has been commented on in my research. It is seen from the balance of reporting in the media that the further education sector is seldom considered or commented on.

Overall, I have found that the literature sources relating to further education and vocational training in Scotland is limited in quantity and scope. There is a similar conclusion for the extent of research undertaken into the impact of inspection on education practice and learner attainment. In this respect, I have contributed to the academic debate by distilling the principal aspects from

existing studies and improving the awareness of these under-researched strands of education provision.

Moreover, it has become clear that research into the Scottish policy context for further education and vocational training sector is not commonplace. The desk-top review and policy evaluation uncovered little evidence of policy impact assessment, or any rigorous exploration of the influence and effectiveness of further education and vocational training policy in Scotland. This is interesting in itself, given that the overarching policy of the Scottish government is to drive the employability agenda forward through the vehicle of *Developing the Young Workforce*. Within the aging population of Scotland, never before has the education and vocational training of young people been more important, given the imperative of developing a skilled workforce for the future. It is hoped that lessons have been learned from the issues raised in chapter 2 regarding the historical failings of some employers to provide appropriate vocational training and apprenticeships for their future workforce.

In this respect, my overall conclusion is that the aims of Scottish further education and training policy have not yet been evaluated or analysed sufficiently well. The work undertaken in this study has therefore raised the profile of the need to evaluate in detail, the impact of these policies and I have commenced this undertaking by examining one specific policy strand.

The findings from the analysis of secondary data obtained from the Education Scotland inspection reports for Modern Apprenticeships, combined with the primary data from the field work, show quite remarkable results. There is evidence to show that in this case, the inspection process at the case study centre was a catalyst for a focussed and methodical approach to embedding improvement. The analysis of secondary data demonstrates explicitly that substantial improvements were made to education practice and apprentice attainment between the two inspections. Analysing the primary data sourced from the focus group interviews shows that the first inspection was an incentive

for change, and this was almost certainly not going to occur without the intervention of external scrutiny. The most significant finding is how the culture of the organisation was transformed. This reformation highlighted unintended consequences which were organisational learning, culture change and a distributed improvement effect. My findings indicate that the inspection process galvanised the institution on many levels to drive improvements forward.

This study has identified a case where external scrutiny has contributed significantly to initiating a sustained improvement process. The research findings show that the dual approach of the Scottish inspection agency Education Scotland, with its emphasis on both scrutiny and support for improvement, appears to have had a positive effect on improving education practice and learner attainment. Furthermore, the inspection process triggered significantly favourable unintended consequences that had an influence on the culture of the training centre. This study has therefore enhanced our understanding of the aims of the inspection process and its impact. It has demonstrated that scrutiny has the potential to encourage culture change in education institutions and support their capacity to improve.

The strengths of the methodological approach applied in this research were afforded mainly through the opportunity to make direct comparisons of education practice and learner attainment between two inspections in the same institution. The careful consideration of secondary data provided a foundation for the detailed exploration within the focus group interviews. Linking these two data sets during the analysis, it was possible to demonstrate a convincing positive correlation between the activities of external scrutiny and the improvement of education practice and learner attainment.

### 7.5.2 Limitations

My contribution to this research field is that I have identified an interesting case where the benefits of inspection have been demonstrated, albeit in a single case

study. Although this research, and the case study findings, are not generalisable as further studies are required, this is not necessarily a vulnerability. Overall, the findings have provided a positive case for the inspection process having an impact on improving education practice and apprentice attainment. However it is recognised and accepted fully that inspection also has limitations and side-effects. Therefore, as with all research studies, there are limitations to this research and this section presents these limitations along with a reflection on how they might have influenced the research findings and conclusions.

Firstly, it is acknowledged that this single study is not generalisable across other institutions, or other sectors, as we cannot compare these results with any other training centre. The absence of a counterfactual case cannot be overlooked. However, it is highly unlikely that a control case can be established given that no two training centres are alike, and no two training centres have been inspected within a short period of time under the same conditions. It is also accepted that during the analysis of secondary data, the quantification for areas of positive practice and areas of development identified in inspection reports is a relatively imprecise measure and that there is an element of subjectivity to this analysis. This is something that would need to be considered and developed in further studies.

Secondly, we should consider the unintended consequences which emerged during the field work and how reliable the conclusions might be around the source and effect of these consequences. As with the improvements recorded between the two inspection visits, it cannot be stated categorically that the unintended consequences would have occurred with, or without, the intervention of the inspection process. The presence of Hawthorne effects and those factors examined earlier in the work of Simkins, such as organisational, cultural and sectoral may well have contributed to both the improvements and unintended consequences to some degree. Therefore, in this case there was most likely a combination of interacting factors that may have adjusted the

overall findings and blurred the boundaries of how significant the inspection process was in improving apprentice achievement and education practice.

Thirdly, there is the question of potential conflict in my role as both inspector and researcher to consider. Again, it is likely that my dual role had some impact during the gathering of data from individuals and groups, and that this had an influence to a greater or lesser degree on the qualitative data and the findings drawn from it. Naturally, whatever information and guarantees were given before and during the focus groups and interviews, including the Plain Language Statement and signed confidentiality statements, it is understandable that participants may not have been entirely candid in their responses. It is acknowledged that not all participants will have been willing to divulge every detail of the internal activities of their institution during dialogue relevant to this case study. This is pertinent when considering the issues surrounding the increasingly high-stakes aspects of inspection. Knowing that individual responses would be gathered, and once heard not forgotten, there would have been justifiable reason to shine a positive light on the inspection process which was being researched by an inspector. The consequences of a more formal follow-up inspection with greater scrutiny on the case study institution, an increased interest in funded activities by government agencies and the reputation of the training delivered amongst employers, would certainly all have been legitimate concerns of participants.

Given the nature of the research design therefore, this study has been unable to determine beyond doubt that the inspection process was entirely responsible for the improvements made to education practice and apprentice attainment at the case study centre. However, it would be reasonable to propose that based on these findings the dual approach to external scrutiny examined in this study will have some effect on an institution, and this is likely to be a positive effect.

### 7.5.3 Suggestions for further research

Given the discernible contribution to improvements in education practice and apprentice attainment that this single case study has revealed, there is merit in considering further research into the effectiveness of inspection. This final section of the chapter discusses the possibilities for more detailed studies.

Firstly, I suggest consideration should be given to further research into the impact of scrutiny in the Scottish further education and vocational training sector. This would involve the two themes discussed throughout this study, which are the inspection process itself and the wider context relating to the long-term impact of Scottish Government policy initiatives.

Secondly, I believe there is further work to be done in extending this research to one or more case study institutions, this would explore the generalisability of the findings in this study. Reflecting on those issues that have not been settled fully or left unanswered by this research, the main challenge has been that I was not able to determine completely that the inspection process was the only, or majority factor, in the improvements made between inspections. This is predominantly due to the fact that the research was undertaken after the two inspections had taken place. If the decision to carry out the research had been taken after the first inspection, a comprehensive set of parameters and indicators could have been established to measure the distance travelled between inspections and the impact of the inspection process.

Although sourcing a similar training centre is challenging, it would certainly be feasible to construct a set of comparators based on this research that would track the response of an institution to the process of inspection. Ideally, if another training centre were to undergo two inspections under similar conditions to that of the case study centre, another analysis of secondary and primary data could then be conducted using similar methodology.

The author's favoured approach to extend this research is to provide a better understanding of the relationship between the inspection process and improvements to education practice and apprentice attainment through other case studies conducted in different institutions.

I believe that it is possible to encourage other training centres that deliver Modern Apprenticeships to take part in further research. The suggested approach is to draw on the findings of this study to establish a *blueprint* of the essential elements that are likely to lead to improvements in education practice and apprentice attainment. This approach establishes a link between the common priorities for improvement identified by inspectors and the actions required by the institution to bring about these improvements. The methodology for a supplementary study would be to create a set of defined parameters based on the *blueprint* of essential elements. These parameters would contribute to a series of comparators devised to conduct evaluations at certain points in time after an inspection has taken place. I would also include in this proposal some form of appraisal of the longer-term impact of apprentices entering employment and sustaining their contribution to a skilled workforce in Scotland. This element would provide evidence of positive destinations for the missing feedback loop identified in this research and contribute to measuring the impact of Scottish Government policy aims for the further education and vocational training sector.

I consider that by using the approach suggested above, a much more comprehensive analysis could be made regarding any direct connections between the findings of inspectors during external scrutiny and the tangible improvement actions initiated by the case study institution.

I suggest that there would be interest from further education and vocational training centres in taking part in this proposed study, as they are very likely to experience a positive impact on their training provision. There is also the prospect of these training centres benefiting from other positive effects, such as



distributed improvement and organisational learning. It is anticipated that this research proposal would be of value to Education Scotland in refining their inspection arrangements for Modern Apprenticeships. Additionally, it would contribute towards developments in the policy landscape by incorporating a clear focus on measuring the influence that skilled individuals have on the Scottish economy. For the Scottish Government, this would lead to a more robust evaluation of the wider impact of their *Developing the Young Workforce* policy.

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## Appendix 1                      List of Acronyms

<b>AA</b>	Associate Assessor
<b>DYW</b>	Developing the Young Workforce
<b>Esytn</b>	The education inspectorate for Wales
<b>Etni</b>	Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland
<b>FEFC</b>	Further Education Funding Council
<b>HMI</b>	Her Majesty's Inspector
<b>LEA</b>	Local Education Authority
<b>MA</b>	Modern Apprentice
<b>NPDB</b>	Non-Departmental Public Body
<b>Ofsted</b>	Office for Standards in Education
<b>PISA</b>	Programme for International Student Assessment
<b>QAA</b>	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
<b>ROAMEF</b>	Rationale, Objectives, Appraisal, Monitoring, Evaluation, Feedback
<b>SDS</b>	Skills Development Scotland
<b>SFC</b>	Scottish Funding Council
<b>SICI</b>	Standing International Conference of Inspectorates
<b>SMART</b>	Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Time-bound
<b>SSC</b>	Sector Skills Council
<b>SSO</b>	Sector Skills Organisations
<b>SVQ</b>	Scottish Vocational Qualification
<b>UCL</b>	University College London
<b>UKCES</b>	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

## Appendix 2 Plain Language Statement



College of Social  
Sciences

**Title of Research Study:** The effectiveness of scrutiny for improving practice in education: the case of Modern Apprenticeships.

**Researcher:** Ian Beach

*You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important that you understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information, and take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you.*

### What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore how the inspection process and external inspection reports published by Education Scotland impact on those organisations delivering Modern Apprenticeships (MA). The study concentrates on the arrangements for delivering apprenticeship programmes and aims to determine if and how inspections influence education practice and the learning experience of apprentices.

I am an inspector employed by Education Scotland. However, in my role as academic researcher I am undertaking this research as part of my MPhil within the ethical guidelines of the University of Glasgow. The planned research will not impact on the assessment or standing of the institution by Education Scotland in any way. This research is exploring how the institution has responded to external scrutiny that has already been carried out and what factors led to improvement, if any is evidenced. In this respect I am exploring process and internal associations rather than the direct outcomes and impact reported on by Education Scotland.

### Why have I been chosen?

The invitation to participate in this research study is based on your involvement as a stakeholder, partner, board member, manager, lecturer or apprentice on a Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programme in an establishment funded by the Scottish Government. Your experience, in whatever form, of the MA programme is helpful in providing testimony to how well organisations improve their programmes and outcomes for apprentices, based on the scrutiny reports published by Education Scotland.

### Do I have to take part?

No. You will be asked to consider taking part based on information provided in the consent form. After reading the consent form, you may decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to take part and wish to stop at any point, your decision will be respected with immediate effect.

**What will happen to me if I take part?**

You will be asked to participate in a one-to-one or group meeting, or telephone conversation, for a professional dialogue on the research topic. The researcher will lead this dialogue based on a set of previously established research questions. At no time will you be obliged to answer any questions that you do not wish to and your identity will not be linked to any responses that you make.

**Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to, unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies. Please note that within any group discussion or group interview, confidentiality and anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

All information gathered from your participation in this study will be used only as a contribution to the field-work for my thesis. Details of the institution involved in this study and all participants will be kept confidential and stored securely with password protection. No individuals will be named or identifiable in any form from the publication of findings from this study. The completed thesis and overall research findings will be available on request from the researcher, contact details are given below. However, details of the case study institution, participants, raw datasets and records of individual interviews will not be made available.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

I am organising and conducting the research in my own time as part of my continuing professional development for my MPhil. My employer, Education Scotland, is assisting with the cost of course fees.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been reviewed by the ethics committee of the College of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow. The outline proposal has been reviewed and consented to by Education Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council and Skills Development Scotland.

**Thank you for your time.**

**Contacts for Further Information:****Researcher:**

Ian Beach

07796707301

[ian.beach@educationscotland.gov.scot](mailto:ian.beach@educationscotland.gov.scot)

**Research Supervisor:**

Kristinn Hermannsson

0141 3302210 or 07816904486

[kristinn.hermannsson@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:kristinn.hermannsson@glasgow.ac.uk)

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the College of Social Sciences, School of Education Ethics Officer, **Dr Muir Houston**, email: [Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk)

### Appendix 3 Interview plan

Group	Questions
<p>Chair of the Board of Management and chief executive.</p> <p>(ACCOUNTABILITY RELATIONSHIP)</p>	<p>In what way(s) did the first inspection findings make a difference to the centre's operations?</p> <p>Did this translate into any wider impact on vision, values and aims? (and internal policy)</p> <p>How aware were you of the issues raised in the inspection? Did your self-evaluation processes identify these issues?</p> <p>What actions were put in place in response to the first inspection, in particular related to educational practice (classroom activity)?</p> <p>Were there any unintended consequences arising from the inspection findings?</p> <p>How confident are you that the centre will continue to improve based on the interventions taken since the inspection?</p> <p>Does the overall policy of external inspection work?</p>
<p>Senior management team responsible for MA Programme and quality.</p> <p>(RESPONSIBILITY RELATIONSHIP)</p>	<p>How aware were you of the issues raised in the first inspection? Did your self-evaluation processes identify the issues raised in this inspection?</p> <p>What key strategies for improvement did the inspection impact on?</p> <p>What activities did you involve staff teams in to impact on improvement?</p> <p>What management information did you use to drive improvement?</p> <p>Did the overall process (first inspection to second inspection) identify any new areas for improvement or new priorities?</p> <p>Were there any unintended consequences?</p> <p>Does the overall policy of external inspection work?</p>
<p>Operational management (MA Programme) team.</p> <p>(DRIVER RELATIONSHIP)</p>	<p>How well did managers and staff understand the improvement actions identified in the inspection?</p> <p>How did you measure the impact of improvement on education practice?</p>

	<p>What motivated you to develop and implement improvement actions?</p> <p>Were there any unintended consequences?</p> <p>What actions were taken in relation to reflective practice/self-evaluation?</p> <p>How well did the overall inspection findings identify improvement actions for you to implement?</p> <p>Does the overall policy of external inspection work?</p>
<p>Teaching/training staff.</p> <p>(DIRECT EDUCATION PRACTICE RELATIONSHIP)</p>	<p>What role did staff play in developing improvement activities based on the inspection findings?</p> <p>What improvements did you make to your education practice?</p> <p>What actions did you identify for implementing to address the improvements required?</p> <p>How well do you think you responded to the inspection findings?</p> <p>Were there any unintended consequences?</p> <p>Does the overall policy of external inspection work?</p>
<p>Support staff/business development team as for the MA Programme area.</p> <p>(SUPPORT RELATIONSHIP)</p>	<p>What role did staff play in developing improvement activities?</p> <p>What motivated you to develop and implement improvement actions?</p> <p>What actions did you identify for implementing to address the improvements required?</p> <p>Were there any unintended consequences?</p> <p>Does the overall policy of external inspection work?</p>
<p>Employers who engage with the MA Programme provision.</p> <p>(SUPPORT RELATIONSHIP)</p>	<p>Were you made aware of the readout of the performance from the inspection of the apprenticeship programme?</p> <p>Can you recall any specific actions relating to improvement in education practice or the apprenticeship programme overall?</p> <p>Were there any unintended consequences?</p>

	Does the overall policy of external inspection work?
<p>Educational partners who engage with the MA Programme area.</p> <p>(CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP)</p>	<p>Were you made aware of the readout of the performance from the inspection of the apprenticeship programme?</p> <p>Can you recall any specific actions relating to improvement in education practice or the apprenticeship programme overall?</p> <p>Were there any unintended consequences?</p> <p>Does the overall policy of external inspection work?</p>
<p>Groups of apprentices from the MA programme.</p> <p>(CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP)</p>	<p>What role did apprentices play in developing improvement activities?</p> <p>Were you made aware of the readout of the performance from the inspection of the apprenticeship programme?</p> <p>Can you recall any specific actions relating to improvement in your experience, education practice or the apprenticeship programme overall?</p> <p>Were there any unintended consequences?</p> <p>Does the overall policy of external inspection work?</p>